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Verification and Legibility in Somaliland's Identity Architecture

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
2015/16

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Abstract

Although internationally unrecognised, Somaliland seeks, like all states, to be able to unambiguously, repeatedly, and reliably identify its citizens. In the two decades of its self-declared independence, this central task of statehood has proved to be one of the most difficult and protracted of all its accomplishments.

At first glance, the impediments to the development of official identification schemes in Somaliland have been limited capacity, insufficient resources, and weak political will. Underlying these factors, however, are deeper issues relating to the state's contested and imperfect 'legibility' of the population, the legacy of civil conflict and the country's continued limbo in the world of juridical states. Comprehensive systems of civil registration and authoritative documentation are under-developed, meaning few people have paperwork with which they can be recognised and authenticated as citizens and voters. In order to verify the identity of its citizens, the Somaliland state therefore utilises practices of testimony and guarantee, in particular authentication by clan elders, increasingly supplemented by biometric authorisation. The intersection of vernacular identification practices and hi-tech, state-led processes is reflective of the hybridity that characterises Somaliland's political institutions, and shows how official identification schemes draw on the underlying 'identity architecture' of norms, practices and narratives.

Drawing on in-depth interviews, participant observation and archival research, this thesis presents an extended case study of biometric voter registration and the production of new IDs in Somaliland, an important contribution in light of the rapid growth of biometrically enabled identification systems across sub-Saharan Africa. I also delineate practices of vouching and quotidian verification as essential components of identification, arguing for their central place in the analysis of ID systems. This thesis therefore offers new empirical material on the case of Somaliland, and contributes theoretically to the scholarships on identification, citizenship, electoral management, and state-building.

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Map 1: Map of Somaliland, showing major towns and regions.



Source: Nations Online Project;¹ regional boundaries and names added by author.

¹ <<http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/somalia-political-map.htm>>, accessed 13 September 2015.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

APD	Academy for Peace and Development
AFIS	Automatic Fingerprint Identification System
BPP.....	British Protected Person
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COSONGO	Consortium for Somaliland Non-Governmental Organizations
CSD	Central Statistics Department (Somaliland)
DSC	Democratisation Steering Committee
ECIL.....	Electronics Corporation of India Limited
ERIS.....	Electoral Reform International Services
EU	European Union
FRS.....	facial recognition software
HIBF	Hargeysa International Book Fair
HPO.....	hybrid political order
ICG	International Crisis Group
ID	identity document
IDP	internally displaced person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO.....	international non-governmental organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRI	International Republican Institute
MoI.....	Ministry of Interior (Somaliland)
MoNPD	Ministry of National Planning and Development (Somaliland)
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MP	member of parliament
nd	no date (of publication)
NEC.....	National Electoral Commission (Somaliland)
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OHCHR.....	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
RFP	request for proposals
SCPD	Somaliland Centre for Peace and Development (now APD)
SLSID	Somaliland (National) Smart Identity (Card)
sg	singular

SMS	short message service (text message)
SNM	Somaliland National Movement
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SONSAF	Somaliland Non-State Actors Forum
SONYO.....	Somaliland National Youth Organisation
SRC	Socialist Revolutionary Council
SSDF	Somali Salvation Democratic Front
TI.....	traditional identification
UCID	<i>Ururka Caddaalada iyo Daryeelka</i> (The Justice and Welfare Party)
UDDAA	<i>Ururka Daryeelka Distoorka</i> (Promotion of the Constitution Group)
UDUB.....	<i>Ururka Dimuqraadiga Ummadda Bahawday</i> (United People's Democratic Party)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA.....	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
US.....	United States (of America)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

Glossary

Note: All terms are Somali, unless indicated otherwise.

<i>ab initio</i>	from the beginning (Latin)
<i>abbaan</i>	protector, patron
<i>abtirsiino</i>	genealogy, lineage
<i>acts de notoriété</i>	common-knowledge depositions (French)
<i>adeer</i>	paternal uncle
<i>af</i>	mouth, language
<i>audience foraine</i>	‘funfair’ hearing; a hearing by a judge outside court (French)
<i>bax</i>	uterine, from the mother
<i>beel</i>	community, settlement, group of families
<i>biil</i>	maintenance money for daily expenses
<i>bilis</i>	noble, well-off, high-caste, freeborn
<i>caaqil</i>	chief, headman, elder (head of <i>mag</i> -paying group)
<i>dammiin</i>	guarantee, bail, bond (also guarantor, bondsman)
<i>de facto</i>	in fact (Latin)
<i>de jure</i>	by right (Latin)
<i>dhaqan</i>	culture, tradition, conduct, way of life
<i>dhaqan-xumo</i>	without culture
<i>dhaqan-celin</i>	return of culture
<i>garac</i>	illegitimate, born out of wedlock
<i>guurti</i>	wise men, council of elders, committee
<i>halaal</i>	permissible, lawful (Arabic)
<i>ina’adeer</i>	first cousin from paternal uncle’s side
<i>in absentia</i>	in the absence of (Latin)
<i>jaalle</i>	companion, team mate, co-member, comrade
<i>jaraanjaro</i>	stairs
<i>jilib</i>	knee, point of segmentation, group
<i>jus sanguinis</i>	law/right of blood (Latin)
<i>jus soli</i>	law/right of the soil (Latin)
<i>khat</i>	a leafy plant that when chewed, releases a stimulant (also spelled <i>qaad</i> and <i>qat</i>)
<i>laan dheer</i>	long branch (large lineage)

<i>laan gaab</i>	short branch (small lineage)
<i>mag</i>	blood money, compensation (also known by the Arabic <i>diya</i>)
<i>muwaaddin</i>	citizen, national
<i>nabad-doon</i>	peacemaker
<i>per diem</i>	daily (Latin)
<i>primus inter pares</i>	first among equals (Latin)
<i>qaadhaan</i>	contribution
<i>qabiil</i>	tribe, clan, race, nation
<i>qabiilism</i>	tribalism (Anglicised colloquialism from <i>qabiili</i> meaning tribalist)
<i>qaldan</i>	wrong, mistaken
<i>reer</i>	family, household, lineage, clan, tribe, nation, folk
<i>Somaliweyn</i>	Greater Somalia, pan-Somalism
<i>suldaan</i>	chief, headman (head of sub-clan)
<i>tahrib</i>	illegal immigration (Arabic)
<i>tessera</i>	card (Italian)
<i>tirakoob</i>	counting, census
<i>tol</i>	kinship, clan, tribe, descent group
<i>tolnimo</i>	group feeling, kinship
<i>tooyo</i>	ask questions, inquire, seek some information
<i>tooyasho</i>	finding out information
<i>xasuuqid</i>	extermination (also used to mean genocide)
<i>xawaalad</i>	transfer of property, transfer of funds (often simply <i>xawaala</i>)
<i>xeer</i>	custom, rule, regulation, traditional law
<i>zakaat</i>	charitable contribution (Arabic)

A Note on Language

In this thesis, I refer to Somaliland as a state, country and nation, distinct from Somalia. I use the term ‘Somalilander’ to refer to Somaliland nationals, aware that it is political nomenclature, but do so for clarity and economy. The term ‘Somali’ refers to the dominant (Af-Soomaali) language and to the Somali ethnies, for instance the ‘Somali diaspora’. Somalia before 1991 is called the Somali Republic; in the contemporary period, I refer to it as the Federal Republic of Somalia.

For ease of reading, all extracts from my interviews are in English, except where the Somali word is not translatable or where English-speaking informants used a Somali word. *Qabiil*, meaning tribe or clan, is an example of such a term that is used by Somalilanders in both English and Somali. Somali words appear italicised in the text with the English translation in brackets, except in the case of ‘caaqil’ (pronounced ‘akil’), meaning elder or chief, which I have Romanised because of its frequency.

In terms of orthography, I have used Somali spellings, retaining ‘x’ (which in English is pronounced similar to ‘h’); and the Somali ‘c’ (which is a guttural phonic with no English equivalent but which is often transliterated as ‘a’). However, I have also observed the fluidity of spelling in Somali, particularly with proper nouns, which often have Somali and Anglicised versions. I have followed the usage favoured by my interlocutors and in the secondary literature, so I use Burco, Taleex and caaqil, but Abdirahman.

For spelling, I utilised the third edition of the *Somali-English Dictionary* by R David Zorc and Madina M Osman (Kensington, MD: Dunwoody Press, 1993). For questions of grammar, I used Martin Orwin’s *Colloquial Somali* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995). Dr Orwin was also a generous and knowledgeable reference. All errors in spelling and translation are, of course, my own.

The genealogy is the real ID. You do not need ID. Someone will say, 'I know your uncle', and then he knows you

Farah, Hargeysa, 2013

Chapter 1

Introduction

Identity Verification in Somaliland

Flying into Hargeysa's Egal International airport, the aeroplane dips low over a seemingly endless stretch of amber-coloured earth, striated by water runnels and hoof-worn pathways, interrupted by solitary patches of scrubby bush and spiked trees. As the plane arranges itself for descent, smallholdings outlined by thorny perimeters become more frequent, until with a bump one has landed. Rushing along the airstrip, one spies out of a window a set of low-rise buildings; out of another, the remains of broken and abandoned airplanes; and a third, a distant camel or scattered sheep, distinct with black heads atop white bodies. Disembarking the aeroplane, one is met with a wall of dry heat. Ushered into the Arrivals Hall, a sign declares that you are now in the Republic of Somaliland.

As at one of hundreds of airports around the world, a standard process ensues: show one's passport, receive an entry stamp, pay the fees, and locate one's baggage. And yet though this may seem familiar, entering Somaliland is in fact quite unusual, because it remains an internationally unrecognised country. The signs at passport control appear typical, but who exactly should queue under the sign for *Muwaaddiniinta* ('the citizens')? Which authority has produced the black passport embossed with golden scales and clasped hands that signify the Republic of Somaliland? Who indeed is a 'Somalilander' and how is this verified?

This is a thesis about the development of official identification and documentation in Somaliland. Though its *de jure* status in the international world of states has been pending for over twenty years, *de facto* 'state-building' has nonetheless progressed to the point where its new biometric voter registration scheme has been described as potentially 'the most technically sophisticated voting register in the world' (Sandhana, 2014). The state-building objectives of these projects are clear: to confirm Somaliland's status as a modern and effective state worthy of recognition; and, importantly, to do so by identifying who falls under its jurisdiction and who does not. In naming its citizens, Somaliland names itself.

State-Building From Scratch

The Republic of Somaliland was declared in the town of Burco (Map 1) on 18 May 1991 at the nadir of the Somali civil war that had decimated state and society.¹ This war would ultimately engulf Somalia, becoming in that famous phrase ‘a mere geographical expression, a black hole into which a failed polity has fallen’ (Rotberg, 2004:9–10). In the former British Protectorate to the north, however, opposition fighters of the Somali National Movement (SNM) sat with clan elders in multiple locations and over many years to facilitate peace-making, demobilisation and disarmament, beginning a process of state-building that continues to the present day.

The first years of Somaliland were nonetheless uncertain, impoverished and frightening. The ten-year insurgency against the military dictatorship based in Mogadishu had scarred both physically and psychologically. Memories of the atrocities perpetrated by the Siyad Barre regime on the northern peoples in the late 1980s, including aerial bombardment, mass executions and scorched-earth tactics (Africa Watch, 1990; Brons, 2001), were fresh and piercing. These are acts that members of the Isaaq clan call genocide or *xasuuqidda* (literally, ‘the extermination’), and the recent unearthing and forensic excavation of mass graves from that time are unflinching testimonies of the horrors of a war that many contemporary Somalilanders lived through (see IRIN, 2001; Reini, 2014; Straziuso, 2014). Those who had spent the months of the war in refugee camps in Ethiopia also suffered: the deprivations of refugee life (too little food, fuel and shelter) were compounded by the predations of clan militia and state soldiers. People speak now of ‘when we came back home’, ‘when we came to Somaliland’, with mixed emotion: it was a time of hope, when people believed they could live freely and safely, but it was also the continuation of mere survival. ‘This country toughens you up [when] you step over dead bodies’ recounted Yaasmiin, a businesswoman in her early thirties who had returned to Hargeysa in those first desperate months (Interview, 2014; translated by Ashkir).

Ostensibly independent after May 1991, the new Republic of Somaliland was extremely fragile. ‘All the cities were destroyed and all the people were refugees’, recalled Eid, a former member of the SNM (University of Oxford, 2015). Hargeysa, the old Protectorate capital, had borne much of the brunt of the Somali air force’s salvo in 1988/89. There were almost no roofs left: people joke about how, from the air, it looked as though the city was full of swimming pools – but these were just the ragged foundations of broken buildings (see also Bradbury, 2008:3). Rubble was everywhere, as were unexploded ordinance and landmines. Hargeysa was a ghost town: many people did not return immediately, whilst others lived in internally displaced people (IDP) camps. There were no jobs; the electricity and communications infrastructure had been destroyed; securing food and fuel was a constant

¹ I do not provide a formal account of Somaliland’s history since this has been done comprehensively elsewhere. For a thorough overview, see Bradbury, 2008; Lewis, 2002 and 2008; Laitin and Samatar, 1987; Mohamed, 2006; and Walls, 2014.

struggle. ‘Life began from scratch’, stated Ifrax, a woman in her fifties now heading up a leading NGO, when I asked her to recollect this period (Interview, 2014).

In spite of the toll of war, social, political and economic life in Somaliland began to stabilise. After a difficult and conflictual decade in which civil war broke out on two occasions, Somaliland seemingly turned a corner at the new millennium, moving past the ‘politics of coping’ that had characterised the 1990s, and which was continuing to hold sway in Somalia (Menkhaus, 2006). A constitution was passed by referendum in 2001, the first multi-party elections held in 2002. Universities opened, newspapers were printed, and remittances from overseas relatives contributed to the rebuilding of homes and the flourishing of businesses. Now Hargeysa boasts glass-fronted shopping malls with displays of hi-tech wares from Dubai. People zoom around town in taxis, and socialise in European-style coffee shops or American fast-food joints. There is even a swimming pool at one of the city’s many hotels. This dramatic reconstruction has taken place within people’s lifetimes. Qasim, whom I first met in 2013, was just a young boy when he first returned to Hargeysa. He recalled that ‘all the roof was gone [sic]. All the things had been taken. I remember we saw little bones of human beings in front of the home ... [At school] we were just sitting on the cans of the milk’ (Interview, 2013). Now Qasim is a senior civil servant in one of Somaliland’s largest ministries, with an impressive office near to the Presidential Palace. All this has been built ‘from scratch’.

Twenty years of effort have resulted in the embedding of national institutions of governance, a stable economy, and a general degree of law and order. There are still many challenges, however. The state-building ‘to-do list’ includes a comprehensive civil register, up-to-date census and comprehensive national statistics, and a national system of official identification and voter registration – key elements that would enable the Somaliland state to identify its citizens and count its population.

Making States, Making Citizens

Indeed, it is the task of every consolidating state to define its citizens. Under the Montevideo criterion of statehood, to be a state means to be able to lay claim to a particular population: a set of people that may or may not share cultural characteristics (language, customs, race or ethnicity) but who are bound by the laws promulgated over a particular territory, and in turn bestowed with certain rights and responsibilities. This is more than drawing, demarcating and defending borders: such physical boundary-making is necessary but not sufficient for the delineation of who is in and who is out. Rather, there must also be legal rules about citizenship and nationality that govern how it is acquired (and lost), and who is eligible for this status. It is not enough to declare that one has a particular legal status – for instance, as a citizen or national of a country – and expect the entitlements and expectations of that status to follow. Rather, one’s status must be recognised relationally by others,

particularly legal authorities, which formally attribute and document individual identity and associated statuses. The evidence of these decisions is often flimsy pieces of card and paper – ‘IDs’ – that provide a ‘legally sanctioned, secure and practically available capacity to prove one’s identity’ (Szreter, 2007:67). IDs are thus valuable proof of officially recognised identity.

There are thus expectations on modern states to create systems in which these identities are produced, recorded, and made meaningful. Caplan and Torpey write that establishing the individual identity of people is fundamental to the functioning of the modern state (2001:1). The World Bank (2014:1) similarly reports that identification is a prerequisite for modern development; and the United Nations states that ‘one of the most basic institutional responsibilities [of government] is providing legal identity’, needed to prevent anonymity and marginalisation, and to ensure access to simple services (United Nations, 2013:50). Indeed the international Convention on the Rights of the Child lists a name and nationality as a basic human right (OHCHR, 1989). Without documentation, ‘individuals do not formally exist, and are therefore excluded from the many points of engagement between a modern state and its citizens’ (Gelb and Clark, 2013:1). In an important way, therefore, the right to have official proof of identity is a threshold to other rights.

The registration of these identities is one of the essential tools of statecraft, since it formalises the state’s recognition of its citizens (Torpey, 2000). Importantly, registration is also a process of standardisation and regulation: identities must be recognisable and comprehensible to the state. James C Scott, in his masterly work on the development of state capacity, captures the challenge of identification quite simply. He asks: ‘How is a state to associate a name, however unique and unambiguous, with an individual?’ (1998:371, note 38) In this seemingly straightforward formulation is a complex query about the informational, surveillance and documentary powers of the state. It provokes inquiry into the construction and reproduction of ‘official identity’, the identity that is registered and documented, and through which one becomes known to the state.

Scott responded to this question through the concept of ‘legibility’ (1998; *passim*): the idea that identities, like other social information, must be ‘read’ by the state. To do so, the state develops standardised categories and forms of knowledge within which the social and physical world is made ‘legible’. ‘Legibility’ thus offers an important way of conceptualising the set of state practices of naming, identifying, classifying and registering that come under the rubric ‘identification’; and is therefore a crucial idea in this thesis.²

² Legibility is also used as an important conceptual frame by accounts of state identification projects in Breckenridge, 2014; Caplan and Torpey, 2001; Piccolino, 2015a; and Torpey, 2000.

Myopia and the Documentation Gap

Central to the ‘reading’ of ‘legible’ identities is documentary proof of official identities as recorded in state systems. Modern states therefore typically issue a range of paperwork including passports and national ID cards. However, the panoptic, centralised sight of ‘high modernism’ that stimulated Scott’s inquiry is not a reality in many states of the world. In low- to medium-income countries, the provision of identity documentation is typically incomplete or irregular because of limited capacity, poor resources, corruption and legal ambiguity. Many people lack any kind of official or formalised paperwork, complicating the tracking of their bodies over space and time. Across sub-Saharan Africa, it has been estimated that over half of children are not registered at birth (UNICEF, 2005), even though birth certificates are considered the first and most important document for the official verification of identity. Where they do exist, official identification systems are often fragmentary, with various agencies competing to provide their own identification document with different requirements of eligibility, cost and inclusion, making coordination and planning difficult (World Bank, 2014:2).

In the absence of comprehensive registration systems, people find it difficult if not impossible to gain recognition of their legal identity, family relationships, age and nationality, therefore complicating their access to entitlements and rights (World Bank/WHO, 2014). In many cases, people are not ‘in the system’, either because they fall out of it (for instance, non-indigenes and migrants, the marginalised and the stateless) or because there is no ‘system’ in the first place. As Piccolino (2015c) sparingly puts it, ‘many [in the West] take for granted the existence of systems that register and identify citizens ... This assumption is wrong for most African states’. Rather than legibility, African states seem to be characterised by myopia.

Related to the challenge of registration for identity documentation is the task of enumeration. The theoretical centrality of statistics to the state has been emphasised by Weber and Foucault, the practical importance by the United Nations. Its 2000–15 Millennium Development Goals were explicitly predicated on the importance and availability of national statistics to measure development progress (Gelb and Clark, 2013; Stuart et al, 2015). However, the reality is that most people in Africa and Asia do not appear in any legal record or official statistic – what Setel et al call ‘a scandal of invisibility’ (2007:1569) and Devarajan a ‘statistical tragedy’ (2013). Full or near-total birth and death registration takes place only in Mauritius, Seychelles and South Africa; and only Madagascar and Zimbabwe have some cause-specific mortality figures (ibid; see also Rao et al, 2004). Where national data is produced, it tends to include estimates and overstatements; typically under-enumerates people who are homeless, nomadic, poor, elderly, physically disabled and mentally impaired, as well as women and minorities; and is characterised by data gaps because of inadequate data collection, weak statistical capacity and political agendas (Stuart et al, 2015; see also Sandefur and Glassman, 2014). As Stuart et al remark: ‘[E]ven when

people are counted, the counting is frequently not good enough. What is assumed to be an empirical fact – a statistic – is too often the result not of direct observation, but of inference, assumptions or extrapolation, or political negotiation’ (2015:7). However, as the Nigerian statistician-general, Dr Yemi Kale, recently lamented, ‘African statistical systems are often described as tragic, but they forget that we are developing, and that these systems evolve over time’ (Chatham House, 2015).

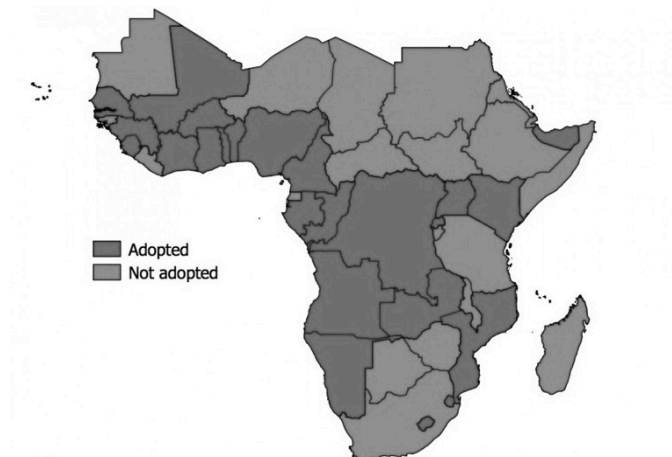
Nonetheless, it remains the case that many African states can neither comprehensively ‘read’ nor count their populations. Somaliland is one such state, long characterised more by myopia than legibility. Governments since 1991 have not been able to put in place sustainable or effective systems of identification and documentation. These administrative objectives have remained out of reach in part because of the financial and administrative constraints on the state. Somaliland’s civil service has been characterised by its own Civil Service Commission as unskilled, inexperienced, poorly equipped and suffering from low morale (Nouh, 2014). Without recognition, it does not have access to international loans or large-scale aid packages. Of course, it has been Somaliland’s ability to fund peace-building, and political and developmental achievements despite this isolation that has been the source of some of its greatest accolades (Phillips, 2013:20–21). However, notwithstanding remittances that total some \$700 million a year (*ibid*), which support many families with day-to-day expenses, and other items such as medical and educational fees (Hammond, 2013), the government’s expenditure budget is a rather meagre \$250 million (Somaliland Sun, 2014c), in the realm of the conflict-ridden Central African Republic, and a third of neighbouring Djibouti (CIA, *nd*). This has therefore strained the development of particular sectors of governance, not least identification and enumeration. In addition to funding issues, there are also important political and technical challenges related to institutional sequencing and capacity-building, national infrastructure and the state’s ‘broadcasting’ power (Herbst, 1998), and the politics of boundary-making in the face of ongoing border disputes and internal debates about belonging. Without the deep institutional legacies of colonial civil registration, central administration and bureaucratic record-keeping enjoyed by other states, Somaliland appears to face an uphill battle to put these conventional tools of legibility in place. This is why new projects, ambitious in scale and scope, are being introduced. Principal amongst these are new programmes of biometric registration.

The Biometric Turn in Africa

Until very recently in Somaliland and many other African countries, ‘identity management’ was limited to the issuance of ID cards for discrete purposes, without universal coverage. These often did not sit within overarching identity ‘infrastructures’ to connect together different schemes, databases, and documents, for instance in the form of civil registers or national identity numbers, leading to issues of sustainability, reliability, scalability, training, and integration (Onyemenan, *nd*). However, in the past ten years or so, national ID cards

have become more complex, aided by technology ‘turn-keys’ (ibid.) The development of biometric registration systems – for national ID cards and voter registers in particular – has offered a way of ‘leapfrogging’ the expensive and integrated identity infrastructures that have historically characterised identity management (Gelb and Clark, 2013).³ Indeed, it has been argued that the African take-up of biometric identification technologies has been far more systematic and sustained than that in the ‘West’ (see Breckenridge, 2014:16–17). Kenya, Ethiopia, Namibia, Ghana, Morocco, Côte d’Ivoire, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Somaliland amongst others (see Map 2), have all recently developed biometrics-based ID cards driven by a combination of demand factors (including improved voter registration, inclusion of the ‘unbanked’ and ‘know your customer’ requirements) and supply factors (not least the promotion of the technology by donors and vendors).⁴ Biometric IDs contain the promise of improved election management, development planning, statistical measurement, and, of course, surveillance and control.

Map 2: Adoption of biometric technology in elections in sub-Saharan Africa.⁵



Source: Piccolino, 2015c.

Gelb and Clark estimate that biometric voter registration schemes have enrolled nearly 400 million people in at least 34 low-to-middle income countries (2013:31). The great proportion of these has been in sub-Saharan Africa, where biometric voter registration has taken place in 25 countries (Piccolino, 2015c; see Map 2). Like a number of other states in sub-Saharan Africa, Somaliland has also adopted hi-tech solutions in an attempt to fill the gaps in its identification, verification and documentation functions, and to meet enhanced regulatory requirements for international financial transfers and travel. Indeed, the voter registration and national ID card schemes discussed in this thesis incorporate some of the most advanced biometric technology in the world.

³ For instance, by using biometric data as a way of verifying the identity of adult users without the administrative infrastructure of civil registration (Szreter and Breckenridge, 2012:2).

⁴ See Gelb and Clark, 2013; Pénicaud and Katakam, 2013; World Bank, 2014.

⁵ Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda and Zambia. Gelb and Clark (2013) also include Cape Verde, Comoros, and Gambia.

As in Somaliland, Automated Fingerprint Identification Systems (AFIS) are now widely used in registration programmes in order to minimise duplicate registrations and ensure each eligible voter is enrolled only once. However, although the purchase and design of these registration systems appears to run relatively smoothly, the implementation phase is often replete with problems, not least basic technical and logistical issues emerging from fundamental infrastructural weaknesses (such as unreliable electricity access), operator error (the result of poor training or weak oversight), and data poverty (predominantly the issue of illegible fingerprints), as well as time and budget constraints (Gelb and Clark, 2013:33). Examples from Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana and Kenya all demonstrate how technical and political challenges strongly intersect to complicate biometric registration; and how the high expectations of new technologies can be quickly undercut when they break down or fail to deliver windfalls in one direction or another. For instance, despite domestic headlines that declared that Ghana's 2012 biometric registration had been a great success, '[breaking] a world record by having approximately 13 million people verified within 48 hours' on election day (GhanaWeb, 2012), verification by fingerprint was problematic (see Commonwealth Observer Group, 2012). Yakubu and Adjei (2014) argue that although the Ghanaian electoral commission blamed the breakdown of verification equipment, the reliance on a single form of biometric data (fingerprints) was to blame. In Kenya, the use of thumbprint data in 2013 to identify registered voters on polling day was billed as 'Africa's most modern poll', but the electricity-dependent system faced considerable problems in dealing with so much data; and polling officers, whose training had been shortened, were often unable to deal with the failure of the biometric kits (Bowman and Longwe, 2013; Gogineni, 2012; Wrong, 2013). Whilst in Nigeria, the landmark programme of biometric voter verification in 2015 was marred by accreditation failures, including of the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan, whose thumbprints were not recognised when he went to vote (Vanguard, 2015).

In many cases, these were glitches with the verification apparatus and protocols designed to check that voters were who they said they were, thus maintaining a basic principle of democratic elections that each eligible voter participates only once. One of the appeals of biometric technologies is the promise of a credible way to authenticate enrolled members. However, as these and other cases show, biometric solutions are sometimes insufficient to overcome historical and institutional gaps in documentation that would enable states to confidently associate names with individuals. ID cards may be the most tangible aspect of identification systems, but they are only one part of the complex technical and legal infrastructure needed to support the creation, maintenance and interpretation of large datasets of information; and the institutionalisation of secure and reliable procedures of proof. In many cases where biometrics have been introduced, verifying identities remains problematic, and thus the challenges facing 'verification' are both technically and politically apposite for investigation and review.

The ‘Verification Problem’

In this thesis, I am therefore concerned with understanding the process of verification within state projects of registration and documentation. Verification – specifically, the ‘verification problem’ – is an under-studied and under-theorised aspect of identification and registration, areas of study that also receive surprisingly little attention in the scholarly and policy literatures. It is, however, a productive area of inquiry, enabling the opening up of the ‘routine functioning’ of the state (Blundo and Le Meur, cited in Fourchard, 2015:39); and in this way contributes to the study of what Olivier de Sardan (2008:1) calls ‘real governance’: the everyday operation of states as they are ‘actually being practised’.

Verification is essential to official identification, through which citizens and states are made ‘legible’ to the other. The need for verification arises when states seek to authoritatively and uniquely name and classify citizens through bureaucratic processes. State officials therefore require assurances that people are who they say they are, but, as Torpey puts it, they operate with the ‘fundamental suspicion that people will lie when asked who or what they are’ (2000:166). State administrations therefore typically construct forms of record-keeping that initiate ‘chains of verification’: trails of paperwork that assure officials that a person is who they say they are, beginning with birth certificates from which other functional forms of ID are typically derived. Some states also increasingly utilise biometric methods that verify identity by reading the physical body – a traditional means of face-to-face confirmation done in new technological ways. However, in cases where the state’s ability to triangulate and verify identity is functionally weak, geographically patchy or technologically underdeveloped, a basic problem emerges: states cannot authoritatively and unambiguously verify citizens’ identities. This is what I have termed the ‘verification problem’, and constitutes the research puzzle of this thesis.

In the following chapters, I address this puzzle by looking closely at the ways in which verification, and identification more generally, is undertaken in Somaliland. I do so along two principal lines of inquiry, or ‘research themes’, which consider how the verification problem can be addressed: the construction of biometrics-based ID systems and the use of ‘guarantors’.

Understanding the Political Drivers of National Identification Schemes

The first way in which the verification problem can be addressed is to develop comprehensive, credible and incorruptible systems of registration and documentation. Some states have deeply institutionalised frameworks of demographic reporting and official documentation, often because of historical factors that led to the amalgamation and centralisation of local or informal practices of record-keeping (see Higgs, 2009; Szreter and Breckenridge, 2012). States that do not have such systems may therefore seek to emulate

and develop them; and we have thence seen the development of costly national ID cards and hi-tech voter registers in sub-Saharan Africa, including in Somaliland.

In this thesis, I therefore explore the Somaliland case in order to investigate whether these new biometrically enabled systems can coherently and reliably address the state's verification problem. I explore how and why the Somaliland state has developed its official identity infrastructure since 1991, particularly in terms of biometric technologies. I therefore develop a case study of how states actually design, implement, and institutionalise new identification programmes, particularly in terms of biometric technologies. As more African states embark on such projects, it is important to unravel the decisions involved in planning, procurement, and execution in order to understand whether such schemes are owned by local stakeholders or by external actors, whether they are designed for short-term gain or as long-term infrastructure, and to what degree they are shaped by political agendas and commercial interests. Research in low- and middle-income countries has suggested that, particularly with biometric voter registration, such schemes tend to be one-off events that do not lead to permanent registries (Gelb and Clark, 2013). Moreover, in spite of (or because of) the enormous costs and effort involved, these projects often do not result in sustainable infrastructures for registration.⁶ What seems to be a silver bullet becomes instead, if not a white elephant, then often a disappointment, despite the vaunting of the hi-tech 'legacy' by electoral commissions and donors (Wrong, 2013). The Somaliland case that I delineate in this chapter demonstrates that there are considerable challenges in creating the relevant technical, legal and bureaucratic components, and the trade-offs in the expenditure of political commitment, resources, financing, and time required for such programmes.

As well as looking at how identification and registration schemes are executed, I also look within the 'black box' of such projects to scrutinise the political decisions that determine their success. Through this line of inquiry, I therefore open up an investigation into the drivers behind new and augmented identity programmes, testing whether the assumptions about legibility and demographic 'sight' are correct, or whether there are other motivations that shape how, when, and why states like Somaliland seek to develop these projects, such as democratisation or political agendas. I therefore consider the formal rules of citizenship and informal narratives of belonging that underwrite these schemes, to understand to what degree biometric identification systems are designed to create inclusive ways of seeing a national population, or circumscribe and define particular groups of insiders with consequences for other political subjects. In the case of Somaliland, there is obviously also a state-making function to national ID systems in the face of unrecognition, so we can use the analysis of these projects to tell us more about political consolidation and state-building.

⁶ The budget for Benin's *Liste Electorale Permanente Informatisée*, for example, was initially almost \$37 million, increasing to over \$51 million by the time of implementation, with the biometric kits accounting for over one-fifth of the costs (Piccolino, 2015a:279). In Côte d'Ivoire, the cost was a staggering \$266 million, or around \$44 per head (Piccolino, 2015c). Donors contribute funding and expertise, but donor priorities, particularly in terms of deadlines, and ring-fenced budgets can skew projects in favour of quick-wins (such as elections on time) rather than long-term dividends (such as sustainable infrastructures).

This research stream therefore contributes important empirical material with which to better understand the logistical and political considerations involved in the development of biometric systems in the sub-Saharan African context.

Conceptualising Vernacular Verification and the Role of Guarantors

Of course, greatly trumpeted hi-tech schemes in places such as Ghana, Namibia and Somaliland all take time to be developed and scaled to the national level. Whilst awaiting biometric registration, nationally comprehensive identity databases, and sustainable systems of record-keeping, the verification problem endures. These states therefore need alternative authentication protocols through which officials can identify and verify citizens. A second approach to the verification problem is thus to devolve responsibility for verification to other sources of authority and legibility. These might be private commercial firms that take on government contracts, such as the identity service providers that support the British government's Verify hub.⁷ Alternatively, states may use verifiers within society, so-called 'guarantors', who are often accredited intermediaries who vouch for a person's identity, but may also be ordinary citizens. The use of counter-signatories and vouchsafers is not uncommon – in fact, many states utilise these as safeguards in complex verification processes – but in places where record-keeping is weak or patchy and comprehensive national systems of registration do not exist, practices of testimony and guarantee are critical to verification.

In this thesis, I call such practices 'vernacular verification', and I look to understand how these social practices of authentication work within official systems of identification. In particular, I try to understand why states use guarantors, whether it is for pragmatic reasons (for instance, as stopgaps) or whether there are other factors that explain their incorporation into the official domain. Significantly, we need to query the use of guarantors and vernacular practices of verification in light of the proposition above that it is the state that is the synoptic authoriser of identity. We can ask whether guarantors augment states' administrative legibility, or whether they empower alternative sites of legibility that may undermine or challenge official identification. In the study presented here, I therefore elucidate how 'vernacular' verification works in Somaliland, and explicate the relationship between 'official' and 'vernacular' modes of identification. Through this research stream, I therefore explain how identity verification actually works in Somaliland, and thus how the verification problem is addressed in practice. I examine how verification draws on notions of truth and authenticity, and ask about how traditional authorities (typically, the clan elders known as 'caaqils') working as official guarantors index these shared norms during identification. I also look at the way that narratives of authentic belonging draw boundaries

⁷ Users of the GOV.UK Verify service are invited to select 'an identity provider from a list of organisations contracted by the Cabinet Office to provide the service. Identity providers are private sector organisations that are certified as meeting relevant security and service standards. They carry out checks to confirm the user's identity, using methods designed to meet published standards, and then communicate that identity to the relevant government department through the hub.' GOV.UK, nd.

around particular in-groups, thus excluding those who fall outside such terms. This research stream therefore fleshes out the broader landscape of identification, and offers empirical and analytical insights about the social context and complex politics of verification.

The Identity Architecture

In this thesis, I argue that, despite the introduction of biometric technologies, authentication by guarantors remains an important, and even default, practice of identity verification for the Somaliland state. Applicants for citizenship certificates and municipal IDs, for instance, invoke the name of their clan elder so that he can testify that they are who they say they are. In the hi-tech programmes of voter and ‘civil’ registration undertaken since 2008, vouching by clan elders has also been incorporated as a key part of the verification protocol, confirming their role as key intercessors in the geometry of official identification. This ‘genealogical’ verification not only affirms a person’s name and nationality, but also authenticates him as someone who really belongs. This vouching therefore simultaneously ‘interpellates’⁸ individuals as members of clans and as citizens, animating different notions of Somaliland belonging. We therefore find affirmation of both the standard account of legibility – that ‘the state and its archiving and legal systems are ultimately necessary to provide th[e] verification and authorization role’ (Breckenridge and Sreter, 2012:29) – and the empirical insight that ‘vernacular’ practices of naming, situating and authenticating constitute an integral part of ‘seeing like a state’ (Scott, 1998).

In Scott’s observations on the functioning of early states, he notes ‘a pattern of relations between local knowledge and practices on one hand and state administrative routines on the other’ (1998:24). This ‘pattern of relations’ is evident in the interaction of vernacular and official practices and processes in Somaliland’s formal documentation and registration activities. My principal argument in this thesis is that the enmeshment of genealogical ‘ways of seeing’ and formal processes of legibility is not only a pragmatic ‘stopgap’ response to institutional weakness and underdevelopment, or an expression of Somaliland’s hybrid political logic. It is also, importantly, because ‘caaqil’ verification in particular, and vernacular practices more generally, reproduce narratives of authentic citizenship and Somalilandness. These conceptions of authenticity, revealed in everyday relations and encounters, and embodied in discourses around citizenship, immigration and boundary-making, find expression in the process of verification, which brings together genealogical and official identities. In important ways, therefore, banal acts of verification are performances of Somalilandness, and thus contribute to nation-making and the quest for recognition.

⁸ I use this term of Althusser (1971) in his ‘hailing’ sense.

This argument is based on a key theoretical proposition that the incorporation of the ‘synoptic’ power of clan elders into official schemes of identification is indicative of the underlying ‘identity architecture’ of social and bureaucratic norms and protocols in Somaliland. The conceptualisation of the ‘identity architecture’ constitutes an original theoretical contribution to the study of identification and registration systems. It captures the complex interlocking of different practices, forms of knowledge, and ways of working that are used to situate and make legible a particular set of persons; and which form the blueprint for the formulation and practice of a society’s identification system. These different symbolic resources, discourses, formal processes, and taken-for-granted practices come from various parts of a society’s cultural and political landscape. From this assemblage can be drawn narratives that help to make sense of and ascribe value to identities in society, and these form the basis of how identification can be conducted in meaningful ways. The norms that determine the grounds of authenticity and validity that enable verification are also grounded in this identity architecture.

I have chosen the term ‘architecture’ because it captures the sense of a framework or blueprint that I am describing here. The identity architecture is more than one structure – rather, it is the set of conventions and underlying logic about how such things as official IDs and verification regimes are constructed. The notion of architecture is necessarily one of hybridity, since it assumes the connection of different resources, some of which comes from the ‘vernacular’ domain of social actors and practices, and some of which from the ‘official’ domain. However, whilst architecture suggests completeness and permanence, in fact I see this as a fluid and plural assemblage upon which more stable institutions (such as registration systems or citizenship laws) can be built.

Crucially, therefore, this conceptualisation highlights that the normative and practical configuration of identification is more than a coincidental assemblage: there is conscious design, superintendence, and implementation (Sykes, 1982:45). The term architecture is therefore apposite because it invokes the agency that is required to engage with and interpret this set of norms and practices in order to construct the ‘buildings’ of identification systems. In architectural projects, we find financiers, designers, planners, surveyors, foremen, craftsmen and, ultimately, occupants; as well as many different kinds of materials and techniques. Similarly, Somaliland’s identity architecture involves multiple actors (including external donors, government ministers, clan elders, registration officers, and ordinary citizens), institutions and practices.

In the chapters that follow, I apply this conceptual framework to the study of Somaliland’s ‘routine functioning’ in the area of identification and registration policy, exploring the role of guarantors and biometric technology in the development of Somaliland’s official infrastructure since 1991. In the second half of this chapter, I set out my case study approach to Somaliland, and my research methodology.

Somaliland as a Case Study

I chose Somaliland as the case study for this project because I see it as a significant case amongst the contemporary states that are introducing biometric identification schemes in an effort to develop and improve their registration and enumeration capabilities. Undoubtedly, its small size and contested juridical status makes it a special case. Like Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Northern Cyprus, Palestine, Transnistria, South Ossetia and Western Sahara, it sits outside the realm of *de jure* statehood (Lynch, 2004); however, unlike these, it has the dubious honour of not being formally recognised by a single state. This makes the undertaking of national registration and identification schemes – a tool of state-building and indeed state maintenance – puzzling and therefore interesting, particularly when the literature is dominated by the experiences of recognised states.

However, though an outlier in these terms, it is also the case that Somaliland shares many of the infrastructural, capacity and resource constraints of other developing states, as well as historical legacy issues from colonial administration, the Cold War and conflict. Somaliland is a relatively neat case amongst these other examples because of its size (68,000 square miles and a population of just 3.5 million⁹) and the contemporaneity of its identification projects. Despite its significance as a case, however, few works on Somaliland interrogate the development of its official identification infrastructure; where they do, these focus on voter registration (notably Walls, 2014 and Bradbury, 2008). There has not been an in-depth scholarly focus on ID cards, passports or other formalised identification systems in pre- or post-independence Somalia/land, or in Somaliland today, either within Somali studies or the literatures on African states or registration more generally. This thesis thus makes an original contribution to the political analysis of these structures and institutions in Somaliland.

In doing so, I focus attention on the political development of Somaliland in a way that departs from some of the more standard readings of the country, in which it is described as an ‘island of stability’ (Gettleman, 2007) or a ‘role model for success’ (Lewis, 2010); ‘Africa’s best kept secret’ (Jhazbhay, 2003) or the ‘little country that could’ (Shinn, 2002).¹⁰ Somaliland is often seen as a ‘laboratory’ (Renders and Terlinden, 2010) or ‘natural experiment’ (Balthasar, 2012) in contrast with the ‘failed state’ of Somalia. Rather than compare it with Somalia, I explore Somaliland as a significant case within the set of modern states that face verification problems in their official identification schemes. Of course, single case studies are sometimes considered to have drawbacks – as Seawright and Gerring quip, ‘the chosen case study is asked to perform a heroic role: to stand for (represent) a population of cases that is often much larger than the case itself’ (2008:294) – but case studies also ‘invite conceptual refinement’ and a focus on processes and patterns (Balthasar,

⁹ UNPO, 2008. This is about the same size as Uruguay.

¹⁰ See also Kaplan, 2008; Jeffrey, 2015; McConnell, 2010; Mora, 2015; Muchler, 2012; and Pham, 2012a and 2012b.

2013:32). The selection of Somaliland therefore permits in-depth, qualitative exploration, whilst adding crucial empirical material to a broader set of cases.

The country study I present here is necessarily bounded in several ways. I focus on the identification of Somaliland nationals, and not internally displaced people, migrants, non-Somaliland residents or foreigners living or working in Somaliland. I principally look at how the Somaliland state identifies and verifies its population, and not other authorities or organisations working in or on Somaliland, such as United Nations agencies, international NGOs or regional governments. Although I do draw on historical material, this is also an inquiry bounded by time, specifically to the current duration of the Republic of Somaliland: in other words, I begin in 1991 and end in 2015. Specifically, I focus on the period from 2008 to 2014, when the most comprehensive registration efforts to date were undertaken.

The Fieldwork

The research presented in this thesis draws on primary material gathered during some six and a half months of fieldwork in Hargeysa, Somaliland over the course of four fieldwork trips: 10 to 21 April 2012;¹¹ 3 October to 8 December 2012; 10 March to 12 June 2013; and 3 August to 5 September 2014. These multiple trips enabled me to fine-tune my research questions and undertake iterative data collection and analysis. I was also able to visit Hargeysa at different times of the year, thus I observed the preparations for and conduct of the local council elections in November 2012, joined in the Independence Day celebrations on 18 May 2013, experienced Ramadan in June 2013, witnessed the impact of the Gu and Dayr rains in 2013 and 2014 respectively, and attended the Hargeysa International Book Fair in August 2014.

For logistical and security considerations I was based in Hargeysa almost exclusively. The British Foreign Office does not discriminate between Somalia and Somaliland, and advises against travel to both. Although SOAS did not prohibit my travel to Somaliland, my insurance provider would not permit travel east of Burco because of ongoing security concerns in the frontier zone with Puntland. My initial multi-sited research design had included phases of fieldwork in Hargeysa, Borama, Berbera and Burco, towns that differ in scale and situation and thus I felt would give me a range of material. However, the reality of the expensive and red-taped security measures required by the Somaliland government for travel beyond Hargeysa (not least armed escorts and sturdy 4x4 vehicles) made such trips prohibitive. Like other researchers to Somaliland, I thus conducted the majority of my interviews and participant observation in the capital city, though I did also visit Berbera, Oodweyne and Burco (as a member of a 2012 international election observer mission), and rural villages north of Hargeysa (in my role with UN-Habitat), which afforded me wider experience.

¹¹ This twelve-day scoping trip was conducted with the logistical support of the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Hoehne (2015) warns that we need to be mindful of a ‘Hargeysa bias’ in the literature on Somaliland, since so much of the essential fieldwork is conducted in the capital, and thus refracted through encounters and experiences there. For this study, however, Hargeysa was the appropriate site for research. As the political capital, it houses the parliament, presidency, all ministries and agencies, and the electoral commission, and thus was essential for accessing these institutions and their officials. Moreover, as the capital, people from all over Somaliland live, work and visit there, offering a cross-section that would not have been emulated to the same degree elsewhere. Importantly, I had freedom of movement and personal security, and this enabled me to undertake a large array of interviews and observations.

Methodological Considerations

My research has been conducted from an epistemological-ontological position of constructivism, a set of ideas about the world and our knowledge that consists of a ‘metatheoretical commitment’ to the mutual construction of social reality and knowledge (Pouliot, 2007:361). Constructivism lends itself to the theoretical inquiry of identification because of its concern with social meanings, structures and identities (see, for example, Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Hopf, 1998; Mercer, 1995; Wendt, 1999). It emphasises intersubjectivity and relationality. This means that I did not presume that ‘data’ about the ways my interlocutors identify themselves and others, their attitudes towards identity documentation and technologies, and the other items under research ‘existed’, waiting to be uncovered, but rather that the insights and information generated during fieldwork were ‘produced’ in dialogue between the researcher (me) and the researched (my interviewees and participants) (see Mahler, 2006:283). This study is therefore a construction of constructions, a presentation of ‘meanings about meanings’ (ibid:365; see also Geertz, 1973 and Wedeen, 2008). My objective has not been to force a systematisation or codification of practices of vouching and verification in Somaliland, but to offer the interpretations I have made within the landscape of meanings and understandings that Somalis have of themselves – to put my interpretations of interpretations amongst others of that kind. These interpretations are of course not stable or unchanging, but born of their context: the specific time and place of my fieldwork, and my and my interlocutors’ identities and interactions.

This epistemological position required a complementary methodological approach. My research project demanded, as Michèle Lamont puts it, an effort to get to the heart of ‘the taken-for-granted categories [informants] mobilize when interpreting and organizing the differences that surround them, without predefining specific dimensions of identity as particularly salient’ (cited in Miller-Idriss, 2009:21). Of course, Alfred Schutz’s ‘taken for granted’ conceptions are by definition resistant to excavation, for some notions and understandings appear so natural or inscrutable that they can ‘hardly be perceived, let alone expressed’ (Soss, 2006:133). Though the interpretivist approach is open to the different

meanings that a phrase, identity, event or object takes on in different contexts, it can be difficult to pin down which meanings apply where and when (ibid:139). My methodological approach was therefore designed to embrace variation, cacophony and the complexity of subjects; to not ‘sweep this confusion under the rug, but rather [hold] it up as an interesting find in itself (Thøgersen, 2009). I thus drew on the ideas of grounded theory, which emphasises interpretation, induction, iteration and flexibility; and political ethnography, which stresses immersion, richness and reflexivity. These fit well with a constructivist position; Kathy Charmaz (2014:13–15), for instance, influentially coined the term ‘constructivist grounded theory’, and my work is animated by its principles of a dialogue between ‘data’ and analysis, a focus on actions and processes, a search for variation, a commitment to theory construction rather than description, and in particular the centrality of relativism, in terms of the relationality between knowledge and reality, between interpretations, and between identities.

By design and instinct, my fieldwork was iterative and inductive: as I described above, I returned many times to the field, but I also repeatedly reviewed and revisited my transcripts, fieldnotes and memos, comparing and coding these to generate the analytical categories of vouching, verification and authentication that became central to the interpretation I present here. Importantly, it was this inductive process that provoked the move from an initial research interest in citizenship in Somaliland to the resulting work on identification and legibility when I realised that it was these themes and processes, and not the predefined and exogenous agenda of citizenship, that were emerging from encounters in the field. As Whyte reflects:

We go on living with the data – and with the people – until perhaps some chance occurrence casts a totally different light upon the data, and we begin to see a pattern that we have not seen before (1981:280).

By undertaking ‘data collection’ and ‘data analysis’ concurrently, these patterns could be observed, thickly described and then folded back into the research design. My fieldwork was therefore responsive and organic, using purposive sampling to explore and enrich the emerging codes and categories (Birks and Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2014). Rather than developing or applying a theoretical proposition in the field as undertaken in other types of research design (Birks and Mills, 2011:10), the explanatory scheme has been informed by the fieldwork. It is in this way that I have met the positivist challenge influenced by Parr (1998:97) that adopting a flexible, grounded and ‘bottom-up’ methodology risks jettisoning an explanatory framework. Rather, it is precisely via the ‘bottom up’ that the explanation came.

This has been enhanced by the incorporation of an ethnographic ‘sensitivity’ (Schatz, 2009) in my methodological approach. Ethnography draws on face-to-face interactions to yield rich material on the intimate lives of those under study (Fox, 2004:311), and is definitively immersive. Though I undertook relatively short fieldtrips and conducted many of my more formal interactions in English, my approach was more than what Fox calls ‘nonethnographic qualitative research that employs observation and interviewing methods in more circumscribed, short-term, distant, and “thin” ways’ (2004:311). Rather, a ‘readiness to be surprised’ (Enloe, cited in Berling and Bueger, 2013:118), and a commitment to interaction ‘thickened’ my observations and interviews. I have ‘cared’, as Schatz puts it, ‘with the possible emotional engagement that implies – to glean the meanings that the people under study attribute to their social and political reality’ (2009:5). I have focused on trying to capture the complexity, ambiguity and multivalence of my informants’ perspectives and attitudes, and to fairly and sensitively portray my observations, experiences and interpretations as they actually occurred. Although I do not meet the call of critical ethnographers such as Vrasti to engage in ‘radical perspectivism’ (cited in Wedeen, 2010:263), I prioritised reflexivity. ‘I’ am present in the thesis, and am aware of my partiality: of seeing the way I was seen, as Timothy Pachirat might put it (2009:158). On the whole, however, my reflexivity has been, as Wedeen suggests, on the side of epistemology – asking questions about boundaries of thinking, modes of inquiry and absurd possibilities (Wedeen, 2010:264), rather than revealing myself in each of my research encounters and experiences. Instead of extracts from my fieldnotes, I quote my interlocutors in order to give voice to their words, experiences and meanings, albeit within an authorially ordered interpretation.

I collected data using qualitative research methods. The flexibility and variation of grounded theory seems to encourage eclecticism – Charmaz calls it a ‘constellation of methods’ (2014:14) – and I therefore considered a range of different tools, including Q-methodology, photo-elicitation, and focus groups, alongside more conventional data-collection pathways, in order to find the most appropriate tools for the research, the site and the researcher. For reasons of intelligibility, logistics and expense, I ultimately chose a triumvirate of qualitative interviewing, participant observation, and archival work, which I conducted in tandem throughout my fieldwork. Utilising overlapping methods enabled me to uncover different meanings, crosscheck interpretations and foster richness. In what follows, I discuss the design and implementation of these three tools of research.

Interviews

Interviews proved to be the richest and most significant source of material for this thesis. In total, I undertook 128 formal interviews, predominantly in English and almost all in Hargeysa.¹² In this thesis, I avoid the conventional division of structured and semi-structured interviews, since this does not accurately cover the types of meetings I had in the field, but under this rubric of formality I count those interviews that I arranged in advance with the purpose of exploring a particular set of topics. These included meetings with government officials, ministers, director-generals, and parliamentarians; civil society leaders, including the heads of local NGOs and professional associations; clan leaders; and other senior figures. The interviews were tape-recorded or noted by hand, and took place in the informant's office or in a public place such as a restaurant or hotel lobby.

These interviews were of the information-gathering and explanatory kind, used primarily to understand sequences, processes and timelines. The format was typically based upon a pre-prepared question schedule, and were often facilitated by, or at least accompanied by, a research assistant (discussed below). These topic guides changed over time, as I tested and retested questions. However, overall I prioritised open-ended questions to give interviewees space to articulate their responses and organise their answers within their own frameworks (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002:674). Like Fife, I saw these interviews as spaces in which the 'person being interviewed has the "right" to interpret the question and take it any place he or she pleases', and not as a format for replicating colonial relationships of the past where an outside 'authority' sets the terms of engagement (2005:93). Notwithstanding this, most of these interviews were directed and shaped by my interests, and although I sought a more conversational dynamic, the use of translators in some interviews impeded the rhythm of dialogue. In other cases, explicit or implicit hierarchies in gender relations meant that male interlocutors sometimes dominated the interview, intellectually marginalising my research assistant and myself. Such encounters prompted me to repeat the interview where possible, and certainly to triangulate the material with other sources. Even when this was not the case, I repeated interviews with some civil servants and government officials in order to clarify key issues or discuss new developments.

I also met more informally with local researchers, members of civil society, and senior figures in their private capacity. Although these were more loosely structured encounters, I count these as interviews because I steered the topic choice, and took notes of what was said in order to probe particular themes and ideas. These types of interviews are sometimes seen as limited in terms of reliability and generalisability, compared with uniformly asked questions in a more controlled situation (Soss, 2006:139). Rather, their value lies in their specific interpretivist function – as a source of insight, not hypothesis-testing (Leech, 2002:665). These interviews were important opportunities to articulate my observations

¹² A list of interviews is available in the Bibliography. Notes that not all the interviews I undertook appear there because some of these were insubstantial or captured instead in fieldnotes.

and put assumptions to the test; as the research developed, I also engaged in theory-testing with key interlocutors. As Lane notes, such exchanges are valuable for ‘testing whether or not the first impression gained was the correct one, for reflecting back the sense of what was said’ (cited in Soss, 2006:135). Crucially, these interviews, together with many more informal conversations and encounters, produced opportunities for triangulation – though of course, as Balthasar also notes, sometimes this ‘manifested rather than diminished the cacophony of narratives’ (2012:41).

On Language and Translation

The language for many of my research encounters in Hargeysa was English, my native tongue and the second language of Somaliland, spoken widely by government officials, researchers and professionals, many of whom have lived abroad in the diaspora. Prior to fieldwork, I undertook twelve months of Somali language training (around 150 hours) with Dr Martin Orwin at SOAS, University of London, from October 2010 to April 2011 (Elementary), and October 2011 to March 2012 (Intermediate). This helped me greatly to understand not only the grammatical construction of Somali, but also its complex and epigrammatic character. However, I was not able to conduct more than basic conversations in Somali, and hence relied upon translators in interviews with Somali-speaking informants.

I engaged a series of research assistants in Hargeysa, who worked primarily as ‘fixers’ and translators, helping to organise and conduct interviews.¹³ In almost all cases, these were formal arrangements, with a written agreement and daily remuneration. Translation has important methodological and epistemological implications, with consequences for representation and the construction of meaning. Such translation goes beyond verbal communication to include non-verbal cues and references, gestures, etiquette and body language. The view of social reality that animates this thesis holds that meaning is constructed rather than expressed by language; and as such ‘there is no neutral position from which to translate’ (Temple and Young, 2004:164). Reflexivity about the challenge of translation requires laying bare the power dynamics between languages. As Temple and Young (ibid:167) point out, English is often used as the yardstick for meaning, but this disguises or obliterates the nuance and complexity of meaning that comes from other languages, in this case Somali.

My assistants’ willingness to reflect on the interviews and consider ways of understanding what was said was an invaluable collaboration. Most importantly, they helped me reconsider and adjust my approaches and techniques; and provided a source of support, both logistical

¹³ In November 2012, this was Roda, a young woman from Birmingham, who was visiting Somaliland after graduating from her BA degree in the UK, and now working as an administrator in Burco and Hargeysa. In March and April 2013, I worked with Tawfiq, a local graduate who aspired to undertake an MA in neighbouring Ethiopia the following year. In August 2014, I was helped by Rooble, a man who had worked with a variety of researchers and NGOs; Abdiweli from the APD; Inshaar, an IT graduate from a local university; and Ashkir, a British diaspora man, now teaching English in Hargeysa. I extend my deep thanks to all of them.

and emotional. However, it was also the case that simultaneous and verbatim translation is very difficult, and I could not find or afford anyone in the field to provide such a service. The desire on both sides to ensure a relatively ‘normal’ conversation experience meant that sometimes my assistants sought equivalence or assimilation of the words and ideas in each language, making them an interpreter of the texts on each side (see Temple and Young, 2004:170; Berman and Tyyskä, 2010:182). These choices of language were difficult to capture, and meant that my notes and transcripts were often in the voice of my translator rather my interlocutor. However, I adopted the recommendation of Edwards, Temple and Young, and others who advise that cross-language research should involve actively bringing the translator into the research process, seeing him/her as a co-participant, co-researcher or key informant – as someone who co-produces meaning, with translation occurring ‘*with*, rather than *through*’ them (Edwards, 1998:197, 203). Although I have not been able to show where informants and participants’ words were not those they themselves used (for the reasons above), I have clearly indicated in the List of Interviews (Bibliography) which conversations were translated, and note this also in the in-text citations, so as to make the act of interpretation visible as far as possible.

Snowballs and Vouches

I initially selected interviewees by identifying key informants according to their role in citizenship-related activities, and later in more specific registration and documentary activities – a purposive sampling approach. As time went on, I was able to meet people via the recommendations and connections of my interviewees – a form of snowball sampling. Since networks are so important and vibrant in Hargeysa, this mirrored the way that people locate themselves and others, as I describe in this thesis. Bjork also notes this type of rich networking in the Somali community of Finland: ‘when I encountered a new person in the field, I often used names of their relatives in order to establish trust. ... Jama said to me, “You are smart. You meet Somalis through relatives; this is the way Somalis meet each other”’ (Bjork, 2007). This was an important way of confirming whether I was meeting relevantly situated individuals, and I used these suggestions as ways of mapping the political terrain on certain issues. Many of these interviews flowed from one another, and I often set these up myself or asked my interlocutors to help make an introduction to someone they knew or recommended.

When I worked with a research assistant, I sometimes asked him or her to make initial contact, and they invariably used connections and introductions to facilitate such phone calls – indeed this was the way that I had been introduced to my research assistants, who were recommended to me by people I knew. This system of endorsement and interconnectedness is part of the practices of vouching that I elucidate in this thesis. My assistants used their own ‘name’ and connections to vouch for me to prospective interviewees, who then took on the task of connecting me to members of their own network.

This was a more modest version of the vouchsafing that permitted William Foote Whyte to undertake his famous study of a North End neighbourhood of Boston in his *Street Corner Society* (1981 [1943]). He is introduced to ‘Doc’, later his principal informant and collaborator, by a social worker; and Doc agrees to be his ‘sponsor’ almost immediately:

I’ll take you around. I can take you to the joints – gambling joints – I can take you to the street corners. Just remember that you’re my friend. That’s all they need to know. I know these places, and, if I tell them that you’re my friend, nobody will bother you. You just tell me what you want to see, and we’ll arrange it. (1981:291)

Doc explains his ‘sponsorship’ in the idiom of friendship, agreeing to extend his own reputation to cover Whyte. More contemporaneously, Scott Brooks (2004) has written about his experiences of being ‘vouched for’ by Chuck, a basketball coach, thus facilitating his entrée into the Philadelphia basketball scene that he wanted to study. He describes this in similar terms to those of Doc:

He was willing to be a sponsor for me to others or, as Chuck and others say at the league, to ‘put his blessings on me.’ Vouching for my ability, whether that ability was real or not, was a way of showing closeness. He was ‘speaking for me’ just as he and members of his informal network spoke for each other (Brooks, 2004:83).

The vouching by Doc and Chuck enabled Whyte and Brooks to enter closed networks of people that would otherwise have been off-limits to researchers. I was not seeking entrance into such a group or site, but nevertheless found that vouching was closely related to ‘snowballing’. Like rapport, I consider it one of the essential ‘taken-for-granted practices’ of fieldwork. Of course, this did not mean that I was validated by such instances of vouching. My character was unknown, but I became implicated in chains of recommendation that gave people some assurance that there was at least an implied endorsement from the previous person in the chain. To ‘earn’ the trust of my new acquaintance required the passing of a test of credibility and trustworthiness. Meeting this was thus a critical part of the vouching process, and I return to this in the section on ethics below, and in Chapter 3.

Participant Observation and Ethnography

To the notes and recordings of my interviews, I added countless conversations, encounters and observations. These emerged from both more structured periods of observation of particular configurations and contexts, in which I was also a participant; and daily observations of everyday life in Hargeysa. Participant observation is a key tool in the ethnographer’s apparatus, complementing interviewing with ‘hanging out’ and conversing (Dewalt with Wayland, 1998:260–61). It offers the possibility of tacit cultural knowledge that is usually reserved for ‘insiders’; and is a useful research strategy because it helps the researcher come into direct contact with the processes she is seeking to examine, rather than ‘filtering that knowledge through other people’s testimony, written records, and or artifacts of ... interaction’ (Tilly, 2006:410).

Despite the advantages of this method, emic life was elusive. I was firmly in the public sphere, and though I was able to move freely within this, I was not invited to people's homes or into their leisure activities. Moreover, the public sphere that I was confined to was stratified and gendered, and my femaleness impeded the kind of publics I could access. Many of my interlocutors were male, and we met in their offices or in public places such as the gardens of the Maan-Soor Hotel or the Imperial Hotel. As a single woman, it was very difficult, if not impossible, for me to be invited to any other spaces: *in situ* observation of everyday teashop discussions and khat chews, such as Lisa Wedeen has done in Yemen (Wedeen, 2007), though theoretically interesting, was methodologically challenging and practically impossible because of language and gender barriers.

For this reason, I undertook participant observations in invited settings, such as the workshops and meetings of local NGOs, and also as a consultant with UN-Habitat (see below) and a volunteer at SONSAF, where I fell in with the circadian routines of its staff and engaged in undirected conversation at break times. I also spent time in coffee shops, restaurants, and shops in downtown Hargeysa and Jigjiga-Yar, the neighbourhood in which I lived, which afforded me ethnographic opportunities to observe everyday life at close range. In this way, my approach took the form of open-ended and unstructured ways of 'learning to listen' rather than direct observation or spot sampling (Bernard, 1988:280); and was a rich source of insight and contextualisation for my interview and archival material. Information and insights gained from my observations are referenced in this thesis by the shorthand citation 'Fieldnotes'.

Archives and Grey Literature

In light of the relatively late development of centralised governance (from the 1920s onwards) and a written script (in 1974), there are few autobiographical or bureaucratic records of early Somaliland life other than those included in story, poem and song handed down between generations. For reasons of access, language and verifiability, however, these traditions, though rich, are unfortunately only few in my thesis. Rather, I prioritised first-hand qualitative research conducted in the field; and secondary literature and archives for historical and background work.

In terms of archival work, it is important to note that Somali historiography is dominated by the colonial telling, which offers some useful material but also has serious drawbacks. First, local histories are most often excluded in favour of certain (outsider) perspectives, meaning that memories about, for instance, the trauma of the counter-colonial resistance or the inter-clan power politics that followed, are not present (Barnes, 2006a). Secondly, colonial records are limited, both in content, for instance to big-game hunting (Swayne, 1895) or technical details of public works programmes; and in volume: an anti-imperialist consensus in both academia and public opinion in the decolonisation era meant that there was little

appetite for accounts of Empire, and many papers and colonial records were shredded (Millman, 2013:1–3). Nevertheless, for Britain’s policies and attitudes towards Somaliland identity, they are relevant sources, and Chapter 4 includes some of my research from the British Colonial and Foreign Offices’ papers held at the UK’s National Archives at Kew.¹⁴

If archives in Somaliland existed prior to the war, they have since been destroyed, hidden or unattended. Despite a project by international donors in 2013 to create a repository of government documents in Hargeysa (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2013), there remains no national archive. Papers from previous administrations are kept in the homes of former ministers or SNM leaders as private collections; and I reviewed some of these as well as the small library at the Academy for Peace and Development (APD). To this work, I added reviews of newspapers in Hargeysa. These were of limited value, since there are no private newspapers, and many of the stories are pirated from international news sources; accusations of libel or censure by the government (including the periodic imprisonment of journalists) also makes investigative reportage rare. Newspapers, particularly the English language ones, therefore tend to offer a monotonous, pro-government, pro-Somaliland line that obscures the variety of voices and perspectives in Somaliland (Hoehne, 2008). Although some of the newspapers offer an online archive from the mid-2000s, I was not able to review publicly available print media from the early post-war period. Nevertheless, through the acquisition, review and analysis of these materials where available, I was able to enrich my observations and transcripts from the field, the interpretations of which I present in the chapters that follow.

Ethical Considerations

My daily mode of engagement endeavoured to be friendly, open, and transparent. I conducted interviews demonstratively in public with pre-agreed interlocutors and often in the company of others. My conspicuousness as a foreign female researcher conducting a particular kind of inquiry meant that it was often clear which ‘traplines’ I had been tending (Simons, 1995) – in this sense, my research was always going to have a ‘public face’. Nonetheless, I also had to ensure that my interlocutors were able to speak freely and confidentially, and I addressed this in three ways.

Firstly, I sought to ensure that my informants consented to their participation in my research project. So as not to create a distinction between literate and illiterate informants, I relied on oral rather than written consent. I therefore began each interview with a short introduction that explained the nature of the research and that the content of our conversation would be written about in my thesis and possibly published. I asked permission to pose a series of questions, and invited interlocutors to demur answering or

¹⁴ These are cited in Harvard short-form in the text and included as full references in a separate section in the Bibliography.

quit the interview at any time.¹⁵ In interactions with government ministers, civil society leaders and other members of the elite, the notion of consent was familiar and understood; indeed, in many cases, they already knew what was involved having agreed to be interviewed. With other individuals, I had to be more patient and explicit; and my research assistants and I worked hard to ensure that consent was informed and uncoerced.

Consent was, of course, more difficult to secure during participant and non-participant observation. My intractable foreignness signalled my outsideness to my interlocutors, whether formal interviewees, colleagues or the cast of players whom I met on a daily basis: taxi drivers, waiters, bus passengers, remittance company employees, and shopkeepers. It would have been tempting to assume that this meant that any interactions were consent-laden and thus legitimate material for my research: that I came with a ‘warning’ sign that meant it was clear who I was and what talking to me meant. But in fact this was not the case, and I was often mistaken for an international consultant or NGO worker (further complicated, of course, by my work at UN-Habitat described below), and thus I had to be particularly aware of research interactions I had outside of ‘working hours’, since for me, the ethnographic part of my research never stopped, although my interlocutors and those in my sight would not have known this. I therefore often relied on overtly ‘performing’ the role of researcher – a notebook near at hand, a patter in Somali about being a student at the University of London, SOAS business cards freely given – so as to make it clear who I was and what I was doing.

However, I was always mindful of the ethics of non-participant observation and ‘covert’ ethnography. In the spring of 2013, I worked for three months as a communications consultant for an EU-funded, UN-Habitat-led civil engineering project at the Hargeysa Water Agency. The role gave me unmediated access to government work, sitting in on meetings between the international consultants and ministers, in which I was able to observe relationships up close and absorb current news and information that I was isolated from as a lone researcher. However, because the material was gathered ‘covertly’ and not as a researcher (Davies, 1999:7), the information I collected during this role does not appear explicitly in the final thesis (though of course it informs the interpretations I have made). In this way, I sought to protect the people and information I encountered.

Indeed, across all my fieldwork in Somaliland, I endeavoured to secure the safety of those who appear in my fieldnotes and interview transcripts through anonymisation, the second ethical consideration. Although I did not interview any members of at-risk or vulnerable groups, I made the decision to change all the names of my interlocutors in this text. Although no one directly insisted on anonymity, some people spoke fully and unguardedly about matters (such as clan politics) that are often regarded as sensitive. I was fortunate to meet with a range of ministers, director-generals, civil servants and prominent civil society

¹⁵ When the interview was conducted in Somali, this waiver was translated by one of my research assistants.

leaders, some of whom I spoke to in their public guises, but others where the line between official scripts and personal opinions was blurred. All interviewees have thus been given one name from a list of Somali names I compiled. This assignation is arbitrary, and might mean that someone from one part of the country has a name more commonly used in another: this is all for the best in terms of anonymisation. Although in reality I met and interviewed a number of people with the same names, I have not duplicated any pseudonyms for simplicity's sake. In the list of interviews on pages 237–40, I note a truncated form of my interviewees' occupations in order to show the range of people that I met, and to help with identification within the thesis. In the text, I include this and the pseudonyms of my interviewees in lieu of a more standard arrangement (such as 'interview with civil servant' or Interview No. 26), which reflects my desire to maintain the human element as far as possible in my research.

The list of corresponding pseudonyms and real names is private and confidential, related to my third commitment to data protection. All my field notebooks and interview transcripts were kept securely by me and not made available to the public. As noted above, I recorded most of my interviews by hand in a series of notebooks, and sometimes used an audio recorder when my interviewee gave explicit permission. In some cases, the recorder acted as a device for creating spaces of official and unofficial revelation, but this created a disjuncture in the documentation and sometimes made it difficult to be certain when the 'off-the-record' conversation had begun. Most often, the recorder made people feel uneasy, and therefore I relied upon handwriting my notes during each meeting, and then reviewing, supplementing and annotating the notes afterwards. I made it clear in my notebooks which were my informants' words and which my notes, so as to ensure all the data was correctly attributed.

In addition to these standard protection and safety protocols, I offer two final reflections on ethics and research integrity of significance to this particular case study. First and foremost, is the fact that my work explores head on the themes of clanship and genealogy that Ahmed (1995), Besteman (1996a, 1996b, 1998), Aidid (2015) and others deplore as a fixation of the scholarship on Somali society. Right from the start of my research, I kept the words of Ahmed (1995:160) at the forefront of my mind: 'Just as divide and conquer has always been a vital aspect of colonial policy, so too have dissection, redivision, inventory taking, and classification of Somali society been the mainstay of research on Somalia, and have, in effect, defined Somalia'. In light of this critical observation, it is important to acknowledge that because this thesis focuses analytically on the way that Somalilanders' many and varied identities are registered, documented and formalised, it contributes in some way to such classification and stabilisation. My intention, however, has not been to reproduce power-laden practices of categorisation or to offer a reductive 'clan-based' argument, but to scrutinise the ways in which modes of identification situate Somaliland citizens and non-citizens in configurations of power, and to be aware of the content and conduct of my research in a critical and reflexive way. I draw on the work of Ioan M Lewis, the early

anthropologist and ‘doyen of Somali Studies’ (Hoehne and Luling, 2010; Samatar, 1988), but do so aware of the critique that has flowed from his emphasis on clanship. As Walls advises, my approach has been one of ‘critical-Lewisism’ (2014:36). Ultimately, I have undertaken this research with the belief that it is only by interrogating the narratives of which identities ‘count’ and what constitutes ‘authentic’ identities that we are able to move beyond the assumption that identification is a technical, bureaucratic or ‘scientific’ procedure, and to recognise it as a deeply political process that affects people’s lives.

My final point is about the issue of recognition. A predominant motif in many of my interviews with senior officials was Somaliland ‘public relations’: interviewees invariably wanted to make a case for Somaliland’s recognition, and pushed to see where I stood on this issue. Sometimes this was a gentle petition, but other times it was much more forceful. ‘We are very disappointed’, decried a member of the opposition at the start of our interview. ‘Why has Britain not recognised us? Why has Britain not invited us to the Commonwealth? They have forgotten us but they are the closest we have!’ (Gulaid, interview, 2014b) Jean Rath notes that qualitative research encounters are not dyadic communications between researcher and participant(s), but contain ‘imagined listeners’: ‘an interview is not purely a private conversation between the interview partners, but ... is, in a sense, public’ (cited in Bergold and Thomas, 2012:18). Research participants are hence always ‘performing’ to their wider cultural audience. Indeed, appeals such as Gulaid’s were not only to me, but also to an audience of foreign policymakers and local nationals *through* my work and me. As Balthasar (2012:40) has also noted, working in Somaliland inevitably requires one to be clear about where one stands on the issue of recognition.

In this sense, I have been mindful of the ethical and political implications of my research for Somaliland’s state-building and democratisation projects, for the themes of the research topic are intimately connected to issues of identity and recognition. Many of my informants wanted to be reassured that this work would benefit Somalilanders: that I would communicate ‘what I have seen about Somaliland’. Through this thesis, I have sought to do just that.

Chapter Overview

In this first chapter, I have therefore set out the terms of my inquiry into verification and legibility in Somaliland, introduced my conceptual framework of the ‘identity architecture’, and elaborated on the research design and methodology of the project. In Chapter 2, I frame the project in terms of relevant debates from the literature on registration and identification. Since previous work on Somaliland’s processes and experiences of registration and ‘official’ identification is limited to a small handful of texts, I bring in theoretical material drawn from other cases to articulate the conceptual terrain of this research project. This second

chapter thus sets up the theoretical framework for the analysis of the empirical material that follows.

I then unfold my argument over four empirical chapters. The third chapter explicates the social norms and practices at work in everyday identification, and explores the way that personal genealogy and clan identity work as a ‘grid of knowability’. I argue that genealogical situatedness works as a form of everyday identification, and show that in many quotidian encounters, one’s name, lineage and clan appear to constitute sufficient and effective ID – except for those who are elided and excluded from the genealogical idiom and the hegemonic image of authenticity contained therein, particularly ‘minority’ clans, people with ‘illegitimate’ parentage, and, to some extent, women. Notwithstanding these important variations, I argue that for most Somalilanders forms of genealogical situatedness are part of the ways in which they identify themselves and others. These vernacular practices of relationalisation and triangulation create the grounds for authentication and legibility within Somaliland’s identity architecture. In this chapter, I also elaborate upon how these ‘ways of seeing’ intersect with those of the state by introducing and problematising the role of clan elders as ‘authenticators’ of identity, setting up the discussion of the following chapter.

In Chapter 4, I review the development of ‘official legibility’ in Somaliland, beginning with the antecedents of contemporary state identification in the pre-1991 period. I grapple with the different ways that the boundaries of the Somaliland population have been articulated in law and in practice, and in particular analyse the 2002 citizenship law, which brings together genealogical and territorial conceptions of belonging. I also consider the emerging contours of Somaliland’s official ID infrastructure, specifically citizenship certificates, municipal IDs, driver’s licenses and passports, and lay out how these demonstrate synthesis between state-led forms of identification and those provided by the genealogical idiom. In this chapter, I particularly focus on the prominence of guarantors in each of these identification protocols, and show how the post-2008 shift towards biometric technologies is manifested.

In Chapter 5, I review Somaliland’s schemes of voter registration from 2002 to 2015. In particular, I delineate a case study of the biometric scheme of 2008–10, considered a landmark in Somaliland’s development. This process was fatally undercut by weak political will, poor technical and logistical resources, unrealistic timelines, and vested political interests that did not address the underlying politics of enumeration. The development since 2014 of a new project of voter registration has been an attempt to ‘learn lessons’, but has been caught up again in complicated political agendas related to the timing of elections. This chapter works together with Chapter 6, in which I review the development of the new national ID card – a biometric smart card designed to explicitly address the ongoing ‘verification problem’ faced by the Somaliland state. Notwithstanding the incorporation of

expensive biometrics technologies, I show again in this chapter that vouching and verification practices by guarantors remain critical to the state's ability to identify and verify, highlighting the ongoing importance of the hybridised identity architecture to the formation of identification techniques in Somaliland. I also show that there is ambiguity and multivalence in Somaliland's identification practices, and that there are conflicting attitudes towards the imposition of formal ID, on the one hand, and the endurance of genealogical situatedness on the other, for instance amongst those who reject these frames of identification in favour of those based on merit and autonomy.

In the seventh and final chapter, I offer my conclusions to the thesis, connecting my findings to the themes and puzzles of the project. I set out my main theoretical contributions and situate my findings in relevant bodies of scholarship. Finally, I reflect on the successes and limitations of the account I present here, and present productive areas for further research.

Chapter 2

Registration, Verification and Legibility in the Modern State

If the political is to exist, one must know who everyone is, who is a friend and who is an enemy, and this knowing is not in the mode of theoretical knowledge, but in one of *practical identification* (Schmitt, cited in Muller, 2010:279; emphasis in original)

There is a case ... for focusing not strictly on identity as though it could be a fixed, settled and accessible domain, but instead on the *practices* and *modes* of identification that make an identity claim possible. (Amoore, 2006:22; my emphasis)

In a question reminiscent of Althusser's hailing, Amoore queries: 'who is authorized to ask "identify yourself"?' (2006:22) In this thesis, I examine the processes of identification by the authoritative entity of the state, which has the powerful ability to 'attach [an individual] to his own identity' (Foucault, cited in Faubion, 1994:331). Through a particular presentation of biographical facts, each person is identified in time and space according to standardised rules of classification (Van der Ploeg, 2013), and thus their legal and political statuses (and the corresponding rights and duties) are determined. Official identification is therefore part of the essential apparatus of the modern state, enabling the definition of the population that makes up a 'nation-state', and constituting the bureaucratic procedures by which it communicates and interacts with these individuals (Caplan and Torpey, 2001:12).

This requires that a state develop the infrastructure and functional capabilities to recognise, classify and regulate the identities of its citizens. This has certainly been the experience of states in history, which have developed complex systems of Weberian-style record-keeping and documentation over time, in an effort to make the human and physical world 'legible' (Scott, 1998). Contrastingly, African states have struggled to describe their populations and broadcast their power (Herbst, 2000:3), and thus seem to be characterised more by myopia than sight. To enable the 'practical identification' of citizens, these states therefore utilise the 'vernacular' resources of cultural and social domains that are encapsulated in the underlying 'identity architecture'.

This is particularly the case for verification, the central strut of my inquiry. In this chapter, I therefore explore the theoretical literature on verification, and the related subjects of identification, registration and documentation, in order to understand how verification works, and, in particular, how this can be delivered by 'vernacular' practices such as guarantors. I argue that the use of witnesses and guarantors is not a deviant practice of

undeveloped or fragile states, but integral to trustworthy and credible identification, and hence can be found across many different kinds of historical and contemporary official systems. Nonetheless, guarantors are particularly important in African identity-management systems, including Somaliland, and I therefore consider three intersecting explanations for this prominence. I argue that whilst both weak state capacity and hybrid political logics are significant factors, the most powerful explanation arises from guarantors' ability to index social narratives of authenticity that buttress notions of belonging and therefore the terms of identification.

In this chapter, I therefore present the key conceptual themes of my thesis and provide theoretical sustenance for my argument that the development of Somaliland's official identification schemes can be understood by attending to the underlying identity architecture: the synthetic construction of official and vernacular practices that shape systems of identification and verification.

Identification and Verification

What does it mean to identify someone? Primarily, it means to ask 'who are you?' and to receive an intelligible answer, either directly or indirectly. Identification may be undertaken in the presence of the person to be identified ('X'), in which case the question is also one of determining authenticity: is this person who they claim to be? (Groebner, 2001:19) It can also be conducted in the absence of person X, in which case the task is to determine the identifying marks and characteristics by which others recognise them as X, and thus to establish means of establishing their identity.

Integral to identification is thus confirmation that a person and their identity are one and the same: a process called verification. This is a catchall term for a number of different kinds of identity-checking at both the initial stage of confirming identity during registration or official recognition; and later stages of proving identity against credentials, such as ID cards. Since names, birthdays, addresses and other biographical details are not unique, verification involves a process of triangulation and cross-referencing: weeding out a particular John Smith by bringing to bear other facts to establish a true match; and then ensuring that this John Smith is the same 'John Smith' that different people or institutions have encountered. Since self-assertion is fallible, and physiognomic or cognitive checks might be prone to error or imposture, identification systems usually rely upon checks to ensure that person X in real life is the same as person X in documents or paperwork – what Martin and Whitley call checking someone's 'biographical footprint' (2007:69). This is sometimes called '1-to-1' matching, and can be done by face-to-face corroboration; using shared secrets (such as personal identification numbers or passwords); or cross-referencing with other records or forms of knowledge, such as common experiences or personal facts (Simpson, 1996).

In Chapter 1, I set out what I called the ‘verification problem’, which captures the difficulty of assessing a person’s identity when formal confirmatory processes do not exist or are unreliable. In everyday life, we use existing relationships, testimony, and other forms of social triangulation to ascertain whether someone is who they say they are. Alternatively, we just have to ‘take someone’s word’ for it. Authorities and formal institutions like states, however, cannot do this – there are too many people and insufficient information and processing power. Gelb and Clark (2013:5) note, for instance, that there are around 50,000 ‘John Smiths’ in the United States alone.

The identification of citizens by states therefore presumes the existence of officially sanctioned and socially accepted unique identities. The creation and reproduction of such identities emerges from Scott’s puzzle that I introduced in Chapter 1: ‘How is a state to associate a name, however unique and unambiguous, with an individual?’ The state can (in theory) easily and unambiguously recognise an individual only if their public identity is comprehensible to it – hence the historical demand for permanent patronyms in particular formats (Caplan, 2001; Scott, 1998; Scott, Tehranian and Mathias, 2002). In other words, although people may have multiple identities, the distant and ambivalent mechanisms of bureaucracy require a single, unique identity: John might call himself Mickey Mouse, but he can only be identified as such by state institutions if his official documentation reads ‘Mickey Mouse’ and not ‘John Smith’.¹

This may, of course, create a disjuncture between the ‘official’ identity of state encounters and the ways in which someone identifies him or herself in their private lives. This dilemma is captured in the following interview with Israeli-American mathematician Robert Aumann. The interviewer asks ‘what should I call you? Yisrael, Bob, Johnny?’, to which Aumann replies:

You usually call me Yisrael, so why don’t you continue to call me Yisrael. But there really is a problem with my given names. I have at least three given names – Robert, John, and Yisrael. Robert and John are my given names from birth and Yisrael is the name that I got at the circumcision. Many people call me Bob, which is of course short for Robert. ... [M]y wife went to get approval of having our children included in her passport. She gave me the forms to sign on two different occasions. On one I signed Yisrael and on one I signed Robert. The clerk, when she gave him the forms, refused to accept them, saying, ‘Who is this man? Are there different fathers over here? We can’t accept this.’ (Hart, 2005:2)

Aumann’s predicament points to the issue of the multiplicity of contextualised ‘identities’ that may be used to signify a person, but where only one counts as the official identifier. The clerk insists that he must be Yisrael *or* Robert (*or* John) Aumann. This intransigence is tied up with the assumption that individuals have only one name in a standardised format, and that this is the name that the state has agreed to recognise (and in turn, the person has agreed to be recognised by). Aumann might be known as Yisrael in the synagogue and at the

¹ Thanks to Caplan, 2001, and Higgs, 2009 for this formulation using Mickey Mouse.

university, Bob by his friends, John by others of his acquaintance. These all relate to different social settings, but they are irrelevant for administrative legibility. For the state, only ‘Robert’ Aumann counts.

Formalising Identity: The Creation of ‘Official’ Identities

We can call this name one’s ‘official identity’: a form of stabilised, formalised, and permanent biographical information that is comprehensible to, and produced by, state institutions and processes. Gelb and Clark (2013:5) define official identity as the ‘attributes (both static and mutable) that individuals can use to identify themselves when interacting with formal institutions like governments, employers and banks’. Primarily, this is a person’s name, supplemented by triangulating information such as date and place of birth, parents’ names and residential address (Marx, 2001). The key characteristic is that it is formalised and officially sanctioned, boiling down complex, multivariate, and changeable personal identities into a core of authorised biographical attributes.

Of course, people can and often do have multiple names and even multiple identities – as I noted above and as found in the custom of women’s maiden and married names, or the use of pseudonyms. However, authorities, in particular state institutions, do not want a population of citizens with complex, heterogeneous, and personal autobiographies: for administrative convenience, states seek to easily and unambiguously name and recognise their citizens. This suggests that official identity is disciplinary, since it requires conformity and resists variation: people are seen by the state in one way only – one name, one gender, one age, one race. In the spotlight of the panoptic gaze, Aumann is only Robert. Official identities therefore reduce and simplify the complexity of personal identity and interpersonal relations into data that can be ‘read’ by bureaucratic processes of organisation. As legal scholar Sobel has argued, ‘[r]ather than constituting an inherent part of personhood and dignity, ersatz-identity becomes an attribute of bureaucratic and computerized systems’ (2002:320). There is thus a stabilising and conformist element to the production and replication of official identities. Indeed, in some states official names are permanent: once an original determination has been made (for instance, on a birth or marriage certificate), individuals cannot choose to change their identity (Szreter and Breckenridge, 2012:29).²

Importantly, therefore, naming, identification and control are closely related (Caplan, 2001:58; Foucault, 1979). However, the administrative fiction of a single official identity is not necessarily the result of coercion.³ Szreter and Breckenridge argue that, unlike

² This statutory ‘freezing’ of identity (Gutwirth, 2009:126) can be detrimental, as transgender and trans-border people find when they are required to have fixed and singular genders or abodes in official systems (Hague Colloquium, 2015).

³ Identification and enumeration can be painful and damaging, not least the ethnic and racial classifications used in Nazi Germany, colonial and post-colonial Rwanda (see Longman, 2001), apartheid South Africa, segregated America and present-day Myanmar (see Stuart et al, 2015 and Snaing, 2015). These show the intensely political agendas that naturalise some categories of differentiation and delegitimise others. Underlying identification is therefore a process of classification that rests on normalisation and reduction, and the presumption and production of archetypes, as

enumeration which forces identity into pre-set categories, the fixing of identities in registration is the result of a ‘bilateral’ process of negotiation between official and private identities (2012:19).⁴ In other words, Aumann agrees to be ‘Robert’ in his dealings with the state, but does so in a way that does not negate his other identities, which co-exist with his official identity, coming to the fore in different scenarios.⁵

Nevertheless, as Scott, Tehranian and Mathias put it: ‘the greater the frequency of interaction with the state and state-like institutions ... the greater the sphere of public life in which the official name is the only appropriate identity’ (2002:31). In an important way, therefore, acts of formal recognition *produce* an identity that is then attached to an individual. Certainly it is the case that people without formal paperwork face difficulty, marginalisation and even statelessness when they are not recognised in state processes of recognition, registration, and documentation; in some cases, this means that, whilst they have personal and social identities, they do not have a ‘legal identity’ in terms of an officially authorised name and nationality (see Manby, 2009; Elumalai, 2016). Indeed, official identities, not least those of the citizen and the national, seem to gain facticity by being inscribed in legal paperwork (see Gordillo, 2006).⁶ Piccolino, for instance, argues that processes of registration in Benin produce citizens by recording their legal status and officially recognising them as citizens (2015a:270; see also Whitley and Manby, 2015). Torpey also notes that the imprinting of names in documents ‘discourage[s] people from choosing identities inconsistent with those validated by the state’ (2000:166). Similarly, Dardy writes that, ‘For each and every one of us, our identity – at least a certain kind of identity – is enacted and re-enacted, stamped and affirmed in these papers’ (cited in Caplan and Torpey, 2001:6). ID cards, certificates of origin, and other such paperwork are the evidence of these repertoires and techniques of inclusion and belonging that operate in a state, signification of what Fourchard and Segatti call ‘the everyday manufacture of difference and commonality’ (2015:6).⁷ They are the artefacts of processes of categorising, labelling, and naming, and in this way present the facts considered authoritative.

Foucault’s work on the mad/sane, sick/healthy, criminals/‘good boys’ shows (Faubion, 1994:326). These assumptions often underlie official categorisation: on the politics of censuses, see Leibler, 2004; Maktabi, 1999; and Mezey, 2003.

⁴ Assuming that the possibility exists to renegotiate at a later date, otherwise ‘freezing’ might take place.

⁵ This is similar to Almond and Verba’s finding in their influential study of civic culture (1989) that being a citizen does not negate one’s other identities.

⁶ Brewer, Menzies and Schott argue that ‘legal identity exists whether or not it is registered (or further, documentation exists for such registration)’ (2015:2), suggesting that legal identity precedes official recognition (for instance, via registration). Others, like Piccolino and Gordillo, argue that legal identity comes from recognition. This issue draws on a deeper debate about whether there is a ‘right to identity’, since political, civil and social rights cannot conceivably be extended to or claimed by ‘anonymous crowds’ (Mordini and Ottolini, cited in Gutwirth, 2009:125).

⁷ For instance, Tawil-Souri (2011:68) has written about how Israeli identity cards evidence distinctions in legal status through colour coding, enabling the immediate parcelling of individuals into units that can be counted, documented, monitored and controlled. In South Africa, the infamous passbooks were used as ways to enforce restrictions on the movement of the black population, and thus to control and discipline their bodies (Breckenridge, 2012).

File-Making as State-Making

In his essential text *Seeing Like a State*, Scott (1998) persuasively argues that these documentary functions are part of the broader agenda of the ‘high-modernist state’ to ‘see’ the human and physical landscape. Through administrative simplification, measurement and homogenisation, the state gains, in his thought-provoking term, ‘legibility’ (1998:77–79). This is an artificial, stylised and abridged view, erasing difference and variation in order to simplify and standardise the facts about the world into grids of intelligibility (1998:169; see also Anderson, 2006). Through the simplification and formalisation of civic status, each person in a state’s territory becomes implicated in these grids – Steinwedel hence describes these processes as ‘the leveling of the governed’ (2001:68). In this way, states can undertake taxation and conscription, distribute welfare payments, monitor and constrain mobility, regulate labour and social interactions such as monogamous marriage, and, crucially, undertake surveillance (see, for instance, Agar, 2001; Noiriel, 2001; Torpey, 2000).

The schemes that Scott (1998) reviews as part of his argument – of creating surnames, establishing population registers, standardising language and drawing maps – operate with the assumption that information is available to the state, or that it can be made available via power-laden practices of data collection and organisation. The means to unambiguously and comprehensively identify particular people requires not only technical infrastructures of registration, document-making and distribution, but also laws and regulations to enforce participation and adjudicate claims, and deeper ideological schemes that articulate ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’. Crucial to the idea of legibility, therefore, is the ‘monopolisation’ of the ability to see and make visible (Torpey, 2000:2). The state seeks the ‘synoptic’ and ‘panoptic’ view from a centralised vantage point (Scott, 1998).

Significantly, these processes not only substantiate people as citizens, but also instantiate the state in a mutual process of legibility. Weber’s much-cited notion of the modern bureaucratic state holds that the management of the modern public office is based upon written documents (‘files’), prepared by a staff of officials and scribes (Weber, 1968: 956–57). Indeed, this ‘paperwork’ is, in many ways, definitive of the political state, for it is in the repeated and routine actions of making ‘files’ (managing records, stamping papers and authorising documentation) that the state is partly produced and reproduced. These files are artefacts of the official decisions of state institutions, created by officials and scribes and according to bureaucratic and legislative rules, about the permissible identities of the public domain. They are, in other words, material evidence of who counts and how as a member of the political community; and thus represent the state’s ability to organise, observe and control the actions of the public domain – who can make claims, who can use state services, who can move freely across the territory (Breckenridge, 2014; Mezey, 2003). Significantly, these banal procedures of documentation instantiate the claim made by the modern state to be *the* authority to identify and verify those under its purview. In accepting this paperwork

and the assignation of unique official identities, citizens thus recognise the documentary power of the state, and in so doing, make it visible to them.

Of Births and Deaths: The Civil Register

Central to these activities of identity-making is the registration of official identities, and thus their ‘attachment’ to unique individuals. There are many different kinds of registration systems, provided not only by states but also by commercial, religious and civic organisations, for a great range of purposes and for different kinds of eligible persons (see Szreter and Breckenridge, 2012:25; Gelb and Clark, 2013). Traditionally, the most important process of identification and documentation by the state has been the creation of the civil register. This encompasses the whole set of documentary processes relating to vital events (birth, death, marriage, and divorce), which gives a reading of the ages, familial bonds, and lifespans of the whole population. Civil registration systems are complex and have long historical pedigrees reaching back to the Middle Ages in Britain (Szreter [2007:73] dates it to 1538 under Thomas Cromwell) and even earlier in Imperial China (Szreter and Breckenridge, 2012).⁸ In European history, they have been built up over centuries through the amalgamation and integration of various different kinds of registering activities, including religious and local records (ibid). Today, civil registers are supposed to be continuous, permanent, compulsory, and universal (Setel et al, 2007; Bah, 1999:48) and ‘foundational’, by providing the basis from which ‘functional’ identity documents, such as voter cards and driver’s licenses, can be drawn (Gelb and Clark, 2013).⁹ Civil registration also enables the generation of vital statistics: the data on fertility, mortality, and causes of death that permits the monitoring of short- and long-term demographic changes, and thus effective resource allocation, planning, and service provision (Setel et al, 2007; World Bank/WHO, 2014).

Civil registration systems require collaboration across different elements of state institutions, including local civil service capabilities under a ministry of interior or justice; the agencies of a country’s health system that reports births, deaths and mortality factors; and a national statistics office that compiles the data (World Bank, 2014). These multiple recording, registering, and archiving activities form the skeleton of national identity infrastructures. Indeed, civil registration systems are considered the ‘linchpin’ of the web of obligations and rights that binds states and citizens together (Szreter and Breckenridge, 2012; Setel et al, 2007). Governments with vital statistics capabilities are seen as better able to engage in effective socio-economic policymaking, planning, and the implementation of

⁸ See also Caplan, 2001; Groebner, 2001; Higgs, 2009; Noiriel, 2001; and Torpey, 2000 on historical identification systems.

⁹ Systems of national ID systems tend to develop along ‘foundational’ or ‘functional’ pathways, with the former being a top-down, general-purpose platform that acts as the infrastructure for all future identification needs (typically a civil register); and the latter the bottom-up creation of multiple and specific projects that over time may merge into a universal identity system (Gelb and Clark, 2013; World Bank, 2014). Each of these approaches has advantages and disadvantages, and the choice will be dependent upon funding, capacity and long-term viability (ibid).

critical development goals. This is why systems of centralised civil registration, universal birth certification, and national statistics reporting are framed as priorities for African states by governments, international agencies and donors (see, for instance, World Bank/WHO, 2014), drawing on research that shows a positive correlation between gross national income per head and estimated coverage of civil registration systems (Setel et al, 2007).

However, as I noted in Chapter 1, many African states do not have these capabilities, making them functionally ‘myopic’ rather than ‘panoptic’. Of course, while we should be wary of generalisations, it is clear that many post-colonial African states have been unable to develop the deep institutional structures of a civil register or other forms of demographic registration and enumeration. There are often strong historical factors behind this. Though colonial officials mapped genealogies, classified tribes and demarcated boundaries, and censuses and other kinds of surveys were sometimes conducted (Anderson, 2006), more complex infrastructures of identification (such as civil registers) were only weakly or not at all established, in part because of financial frugality, and in part because ‘native’ populations were subjects, not citizens, meaning that administrators did not need to accurately identify individuals as rights-holders (Piccolino, 2015a:275; see also Gelb and Clark, 2013, and Szreter and Breckenridge, 2012). The enormous pressures of the post-independence period, particularly meagre economies and conflict emergencies, later inhibited governments in the establishment of registration infrastructures that connect together patchy repositories of civil information, such as parish birth registers or other local documents (Breckenridge, 2010:645).

Today, multiple and competing pressures to develop social, economic and political sectors simultaneously and sustainably mean certain agendas are prioritised at the expense of others. State functions such as national statistics, civil registration and national identity documentation suffer from long-term underdevelopment and under-investment. Those states that do have legacy civil registers from the time of colonialism must bring them up to date, whilst others must build them from scratch.¹⁰ Of course this is not just the case in Africa. In many developing countries, the infrastructure for data collection, record-keeping and information dissemination is geographically patchy, technically poor, and deficient in expertise and full-time staff (World Bank/WHO, 2014). These challenges mean that when registration programmes are undertaken, they are typically built onto mediocre or unreliable systems or repeatedly initiated, wasting money and resources (Gelb and Clark, 2013). These ongoing capacity, expertise and funding struggles are a leading driver of the ‘biometric explosion’ that I described in Chapter 1, as states in sub-Saharan Africa attempt to build comprehensive, state-centred capacities for registration and identification.

¹⁰ The Second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration in 2012 stated that civil registration is important and desirable, providing data on population dynamics on a continuous basis at lower administrative levels, and is the best route for the generation of vital statistics. Where civil registration is inadequate, governments can use censuses, sample surveys, or facility-based records, but the ministers noted that these are merely snapshots (Economic Commission for Africa, 2012).

Describing the Electorate: The Voter Register

Principal amongst these new schemes are programmes of voter registration. The ‘third wave’ of democratisation that launched in Africa with the end of the Cold War and the drive towards multi-party elections in the early 1990s, has made the construction of comprehensive and effective electoral-management institutions a critical task for African states. Of these, voter registration is one of the most important. It is the process of registering eligible voters in a specified electoral constituency in order to produce a voter register, against which voters on election day are checked in order to permit those eligible to vote to do so, and prohibit those who are not. Unlike civil registers, it is not universal – only eligible citizens are supposed to be included. Voter registration can be conducted as a complete, one-time exercise (active registration), or the voter roll can be extracted from other demographic databases such as a civil register (passive registration); the list of eligible voters can then be updated on a periodic (for instance, just before an election) or continuous basis (possibly in tandem with the civil register) (Evrensel, 2006:22). Whilst actual voting behaviour is determined by a number of interlocking factors, particularly socio-economic ones, eligibility to vote comes typically from citizenship and age: voters must be over the age of majority, and a full citizen, omitting visitors, temporary migrants and non-naturalised residents.¹¹ These formal constitutional criteria make it clear who is legally entitled to vote: whether they can actually do so depends in most cases on being a registered voter. Voter registration is therefore an integral part of exercising the right to vote on both equity and exclusion grounds: it delineates eligible voters from non-eligible persons, and enables every eligible voter to vote once and only once.

By circumscribing who may do what, voter registration is an important tool of power through which a public is defined and managed. Electorates are what Kelley, Ayres and Bowen call artefacts of political decisions: ‘within limits, they can be constructed to a size and composition deemed desirable by those in power’ (1967:375). Thus what appears to be a neutral bureaucratic procedure in which electorates are described is in fact a political process in which they are produced.¹² As political objects, voter registers can become the site of political dispute, since they are intimately related to the creation of winners and losers at election time. As Young remarks, ‘elections make people aware of numbers, *their* numbers, in a way they often were not before’ (1993:308; emphasis in original). This is why voter registration drives, designed ostensibly for inclusion, are often accompanied by the mobilisation of citizens by political entrepreneurs, and why in weak systems, this can lead to multiple registrations.¹³

¹¹ There are also sometimes country and electoral district residence minimum requirements. In a majority of democratic countries surveyed by Blais et al, citizens residing abroad may vote (2001: 54–57).

¹² Literacy tests, long periods of residence and obdurate bureaucratic procedures have all been used to make it more difficult for certain parts of historical and contemporary electorates to register, particularly in periodic, active systems where the costs of registration for individual voters are high (Atkeson et al, 2010). Even in well-organised systems, the requirement for physical appearance at government offices, onerous validity standards for documentation, and weak civic education all create barriers of access for potential registrants (Blais et al, 2010).

¹³ As in Somaliland, as I explain in Chapter 5.

As Map 2 in Chapter 1 shows, around half of African countries have introduced some form of hi-tech voter registration in recent years in an effort to deliver ‘free and fair’ elections and thus enhance their democratic credentials. These new biometric voter registers are designed to overcome historical deficiencies in electoral management, in which same-day or paper-based registration was often vulnerable to fraud in the form of tampering, the creation of ‘ghost’ records, and multiple registrations. These impoverished lists often became lightning rods for contestation over voter eligibility arising from complex and unresolved citizenship debates (for instance, see Breckenridge, 2010, and Piccolino 2015b), and thus highly politicised. As with the recent addressing of civil registration deficiencies, new programmes of voter registration in sub-Saharan Africa face considerable technical, financial, and logistical challenges.

Political and Technical Questions

Both civil and voter registration lead to the production of credentials, such as ID cards, and the creation of information databases to be used as the basis of future documentation or authorisation (such as electoral rolls). Registration in both these cases is designed to stabilise identities in ways that are legible to state authorities via the administrative fabrication of official identity. Although voter registers do not ‘produce’ identity in the same way as civil registers – in which one’s name is recorded and fixed at birth – the act of registering as a voter is similarly a performance of one’s official identity. In both cases, therefore, civil and voter registration are deeply political undertakings that articulate and enforce legal and administrative boundaries between insiders and outsiders. The politics of these programmes is thus essential to understand, requiring empirical investigation of the ways that discourses of inclusion and citizenship are invoked and underpin the design and implementation of registration.

The construction of ‘official identities’ is intimately connected to social narratives about belonging and the boundaries of in- and out-groups. Citizenship is a legal category constituted by the state, but is intimately connected to other political and social identities. As Kerber has explained: ‘It is in citizenship that the personal and political come together, because citizenship is about how individuals make and remake the state’ (1997:854). To date, the dominant conceptualisations of citizenship have been framed in terms of the experiences of Western societies (Halisi et al, 1998:338). The liberal conception of the ‘consumer-citizen’ dominates, influenced by the post-war rights-based approach of T H Marshall. In a classic formulation, Zubaida (1999:389) states this as: ‘Citizenship and legal rights, in so far as they are enforced, liberate the individual from the tyranny of primordial groups, and promote more voluntary forms of sociability’. This of course raises thorny questions about how group membership and individual rights can be reconciled; but also leads us to ask whether norms like obligation, reciprocity, and relationality, of particular relevance in many African societies, should not also be included (Halisi et al, 1998; Ekeh,

1975). As Chatterjee (2004), Hindess (2004) and others have noted, ‘the citizen’ is not necessarily a dominant or even possible political category for the majority of the world’s population who enact themselves politically through identities that do not fit into Western civic concepts. However, if we take Yeatman’s position (2008) that citizenship can tell us simply about how participants in social life are constructed, citizenship can obviously be politically salient and analytically useful in non-Western contexts. Certainly when it comes to questions about state regimes of identification, citizenship is an essential lens for understanding how boundaries are constructed and enforced, and the dominant narratives of the ‘good’ or authentic citizen. Citizenship laws are also integral parts of the statecraft of African states, and contain important clues about the grounds of authentication at work (Manby, 2009).

It is also important to investigate the technical and administrative processes involved in the creation or upgrading of civil and voter registers, uncovering how procurement decisions are made, which companies are hired, and how these schemes are executed. In doing so, we can get a sense of how issues around privacy and data security, sustainability, and partnership with foreign contractors are managed.¹⁴ Crucially, these studies must also investigate what Hecht calls ‘technopolitics’, the ‘strategic practice of designing or using technology to constitute, embody, or enact political goals’ (2009:56).¹⁵ As I explained above, the construction of voter registers can have significant political outcomes, for instance in terms of electoral constituency demarcation, voter education, and voter turnout. However, as Young (1993:304) has observed, despite the great energy expended in running and analysing elections in Africa, understanding of their effects and processes is surprisingly incomplete. More than twenty years later, elections, democratisation and democracy consolidation form a considerable part of the research undertaken on African states, but there remains very little scholarship on African elections as technical processes, particularly voter registration (Piccolino, 2015a:270). Opening up the political and bureaucratic decisions and activities involved in processes of registration will therefore give us greater insight into how these systems are developed, and what implications they have for the construction and consolidation of national political communities.

¹⁴ Breckenridge (2010:645) reports the ‘sordid’ allegations of official bribery by the multinational ID company Sagem in Nigeria formed the background to it winning the bid to deliver the Ghanaian project. In both cases, mounting financial and administrative costs, and technical failure followed (ibid:648). The furore around the involvement of Mastercard in the Nigerian national ID card (see Court, 2014) provokes similar questions about the economy of identification.

¹⁵ I use this definition which fits the context of technical registration better than, say, Timothy Mitchell’s use of technopolitics which he describes as an ‘alloy’ that emerges from technical projects that seem to be led by human agency, but which are in fact ‘overrun by the unintended’ (2002:42–43).

Verification

Within this host of issues lies an extremely important component of identification. Civil and voter registers are meaningless if the state cannot ensure that a person is who she says she is before that identity is permanently fixed to her. However, as will be clear from the preceding discussion, without birth certificates, national identity documentation, or other forms of official certification, it is extremely challenging for authorities to do this. In Chapter 1, I termed this the ‘verification problem’, and posited that overcoming this dilemma requires the construction or improvement of a state’s identity-management infrastructure, or the utilisation of other resources in society, such as witnesses and ‘guarantors’. In this section, I thus elucidate the issue of verification in the context of official identification, exploring ‘vernacular’ verification in particular, and offering three explanations as to why these practices are prominent in registration and documentation protocols.

In this thesis, I discuss three main avenues of verification. The first is the use of the state’s file-making functions at the point of birth, in which officials record and fix a child’s identity with a birth certificate that, in the global north, typically becomes part of a system of civil registration. Birth certificates are considered the essential document for legal identity (World Bank/WHO, 2014; World Bank, 2014), and universal birth certification is enshrined as a human right in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is the first document in the verification chain, and is thus used to obtain other kinds of identity documentation. For this reason it is sometimes called a ‘breeder document’, defined as ‘an ID document issued to support a person’s identity and used to obtain another document or privilege of greater perceived value’ (Mercer, cited in Ministry of Health and Sanitation, 2014). However, birth certificates are vulnerable to fraud,¹⁶ and part of a complex system of registration that is not instituted in all countries: over half of children in sub-Saharan Africa are not registered at birth (UNICEF, 2005). Indeed, many people lack any kind of authoritative documentation that affirms their age, place of birth or nationality – key attributes of ‘official’ identity. For this reason, authorities can use a person’s body to check that they are who they say they are, for instance through particular defining marks, such as birthmarks or gestures; or increasingly through biometric checks: this person is X because their fingerprint/blood/DNA matches the record for X. This constitutes the second avenue of verification.

¹⁶ Their ‘gatekeeping’ function means that birth certificates are often fraudulently obtained to initiate genuine documentation. Even in advanced states, keeping track of birth certificates, and ensuring their security and credibility, can be difficult: in the US, for instance, over 14,000 different versions of birth certificates were found to be in circulation, issued by 6,422 different entities, with records easily publicly accessed and purchased in thirteen states, opening up significant opportunities for fraud (Office of Inspector General, 2000:ii–iii). Since the birth certificate is considered the single, originating source of official identity, the concern about fraudulent birth certification is therefore that it verifies functional identity documents that do not pertain to an officially recognised person. Triangulation is therefore increasingly used, drawing on other sources of identification including commercial data, since birth certificates are not infallible (Lyon, 2001:295).

Biometric Authorisation

‘Biometrics’ refers to the physical characteristics of the human body that can be used to establish identity (World Bank, 2014:8); and technologies that collect and analyse this data are increasingly being used to supplement paper-based administrative verification. The basic physical characteristics of appearance have always been used to distinguish people from one another and identify particular individuals (Gelb and Clark, 2013:1). The body has also long been central to official identification, evident from historical disciplinary practices, such as branding, that marked delinquency (Foucault, 1979); the search for the anthropometric indicators of recidivism by nineteenth-century sociologists and criminologists (Sekula, 1986:33; see also Becker, 2001); the use of photographs and fingerprints in administration from the early twentieth century on (see Breckenridge, 2005, 2014 on the South African case; and Joseph, 2001 on Edwardian Britain); and the relatively modern use of forensic technology, such as blood, DNA and genetic testing (Higgs, 2009:352; Sankar, 2001). Today, biometric technology collects ‘automatically measurable, robust and distinctive’ data about physical characteristics (typically, facial features, fingerprints and iris pattern)¹⁷ that, when connected to personal information, creates a unique identity profile (Gelb and Clark, 2013:8). Biometric data is therefore unique information about a person, and in this sense offer greater security and credibility than more traditional kinds of identity information. Typically, biometric technologies look for patterns in fingerprints, irises and facial structure, and use these to create algorithms specific to each person, enabling their identity to be established and fixed to them within corresponding databases (World Bank, 2014). In these techniques, therefore, the body, or part thereof, is surrendered for examination: instead of the person, an abstracted ‘machine-readable’ body (Van der Ploeg, 2013) is submitted as a means of answering ‘who are you’.

Two key assumptions of identification are uniqueness and singularity: there is only one of a person X, and X can be verified as X.¹⁸ Biometrics are therefore useful for de-duplication (the process of checking whether a person has already enrolled in an identification system, and thus minimising errors or fraud); and for automating processes that would otherwise be channels for extortion and bribery, or for unwanted intrusion or scrutiny (Gelb and Clark, 2013). However, the potential benefits of these systems are only as good as the data they collect: fingerprint scans, for instance, although probably the most common and well-established form of biometric data, can be of poor quality because of degradation from manual labour and age, affecting the ability of computer software to accurately match the

¹⁷ Other less-typical features include voiceprints, retinal scans, vein patterns, lip movements, gait and DNA (Gelb and Clark, 2012:8).

¹⁸ We also find basic postulations of stability (that people do not change over time); and normality, found not only in terms of standard units and measurements (for instance, ten fingers, two eyes), but also in terms of fitting into pre-chosen categories. This emerges from the use of commonality as the central parameter for identifying criteria, which has the peculiar effect of effacing individuality in favour of general and standardised categories of meaning. This idea of the body reduced to its readable parts is at the heart of Foucault’s analysis of the state’s use of statistics and the science of population as tools of surveillance and control; of the panoptic power of the state ‘to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits’ (Foucault, 1979:143).

data points to verify individuals' prints.¹⁹ Most importantly, biometrics can only confirm that particular biological data matches the person whom it came from (1-to-1 verification) or matches a person already registered within a database (1-to-many identification) (World Bank, 2014:29). It cannot determine the identity of voters, for instance, unless the proof of eligibility (such as citizenship, age and residence) is also included in the profile (Evrensel, 2006:43). In fact, even more fundamentally, argue Whitley and Manby (2015), biometrics 'cannot address the fundamental question of whether a person is who they say they are ... only whether the person holding the relevant ID card is reasonably certain to be the person to whom the card was issued'. Biometric data is thus intended to work in concert with other forms of identity verification, such as civil registers and ID cards – it is not a surrogate (Gelb and Clark, 2013).

Vernacular Verification

This is a critical point because it brings us back again to the need for triangulated verification. The reality is that even sophisticated biometric systems (at least in their current form) require an originating chain of verification to ensure that a person is who they say they are, and, crucially, to determine eligibility. However, where 'breeder documents' such as birth certificates, voter cards or driver's licenses are not available as artefacts of effective registration processes, verification must use other forms of 'metadata', which the World Bank (2014:9) recognises as 'community affidavits, (including those from religious institutions), certificates from educational institutions, and other proofs of identification or use of name and social reputation, and/or may include self-declarations of applicant collected by a trained agent during enrollment [sic]'.²⁰

I term these forms of testimony and vouching 'vernacular' verification, which I conceptualise as a set of practices in the local idiom – they are ordinary, social (as in shared and relational), and situational actions that draw from understandings of 'the way things are done' (Bourdieu, 1977; De Certeau, 1984). Of course, testimony is not excluded from other avenues of verification – parental attestation is essential to birth certification, for instance – but it is often seen as either an alternative (as in the provision of 'metadata') or a safeguard or stopgap for these. Vernacular practices of verification are, however, viable and important. Indeed, in places where record-keeping is weak or patchy and comprehensive national systems of registration do not exist, these practices of testimony are critical to verification.

¹⁹ Iris scans, although considered to be more reliable, are also not stable over time (as previously thought), and can be affected by eye conditions such as cataracts (Bowyer et al, 2009). DNA is the only stable physical characteristic but this, together with other biometric characteristics, is expensive to incorporate into identification systems and thus rarely used (ibid).

²⁰ The use of religious or customary records (such as those that mark baptisms) or affidavits by local officials has historically been very important to the development of registration systems. For instance, Szreter (2007:72) has shown that parish registers in medieval Britain acted as an early system of national identity registration and public information enabling the 'routine, low-cost and reliable' verification of identities (see also Higgs, 2009). Szreter and Breckenridge (2012:29) argue that theoretically self-declarations are not a form of verification; however the World Bank (2014) accepts that self-authorisation may be the only available form of identification.

Guarantors

The ‘metadata’ produced by vernacular verification is typically provided by key individuals in society. In procedures of official identification, this is usually someone with some kind of authoritative status. Such ‘guarantors’ have long been part of many states’ identity management systems. In revolutionary France, for instance, ‘common-knowledge’ depositions (*acts de notoriété*), drawing on local knowledge, were used to prove age (Noiriel, 2001:38). According to Higgs, most credit transactions in England were performed before witnesses well into the nineteenth century; whilst in the early twentieth century, the British welfare system used a ‘recommender system’ to identify claimants, in which a person with official status in the local community vouched for a person’s identity through countersignature, or a signed ‘life certificate’ attested by a religious, administrative or political officer (2009:350).

Many contemporary states also use ‘guarantors’ for official documentation in situations in which previous IDs are problematic or someone’s physical appearance has dramatically changed. In the US, the public notary system enables the use of accredited persons to administer oaths and witness signatures. Lawful notarisation requires that the notary affirms the identity of the signer, either through personal knowledge (‘regular interaction over time has given the notary a deep-seated belief in the person’s identity’) or through the presentation of identity evidence, such as a driver’s license (American Society of Notaries, nd). In other countries, such as the UK and Australia, the guarantor must know the applicant, be enumerated or documented themselves in official systems (such as passports or social security), and be prepared to endorse the applicant’s identity in writing, by telephone or sometimes in person. Importantly, they must also belong to one of a specified number of occupational groups (commonly lawyers, teachers, elected representatives, medical practitioners, security personnel or financial agents) or be a person of ‘standing’ in the community (such as ministers of religion).²¹

In other states, the rules governing who can be a guarantor are less specified, or else accommodate ordinary citizens under specific conditions, such as the permitting of already-registered voters to vouch for the residency of someone registering on election day in some US states.²² In Benin, Piccolino (2015a:280) reported that over a quarter of citizens in Benin’s pre-voter registration census were unable to present identification documentation

²¹ The UK Passport Office (2013:11) gives examples of counter-signatories with ‘standing’ as ‘bank or building-society officials, police officers, civil servants, ministers of religion and people with professional qualifications – teachers, accountants, engineers, solicitors’. The Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (nd) lists the following guarantor occupational groups in cases where the applicant is from overseas and/or is unable to name an Australian guarantor who has known them for more than two years: chartered accountants, bailiffs, barristers, solicitors and patent attorneys, bank managers, chartered engineers, clerk of courts and petty sessions, dentists, elected representatives, salaried holders of statutory offices, judges, marriage celebrants, members of the Australian Defence Force, chartered company secretaries, pharmacists, police officers, postal managers, public servants, medical practitioners, nurses, tax agents, veterinary surgeons, sheriffs, stipendiary magistrates, teachers. Many of these professionals have to be registered with the relevant body, or have served continuously for five years in that post.

²² This is to ensure that all voters engaging in same-day registration are able to fulfill the requirement to prove residency without having to provide documentation they do not have (for instance, people without permanent addresses). See National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015.

(including the newly distributed birth certificates), and were therefore registered on their own declaration or that of the family head.²³ Eggen (2011:320) has shown how villagers in Malawi depend upon chiefs for the ‘confirmation of identity, which is necessary to open a bank account or obtain a driving license or passport ... and the court will usually only handle cases if brought forward by the police or if the complaint is accompanied by a letter from the chief’.

In each of these cases, guarantors act as important gatekeepers of identity, mediating between authorities and citizens. Guarantors enable states to overcome issues arising from the lack of documentation and constrained bureaucratic infrastructure, whilst undocumented citizens are able to access benefits that require official identification, often in ways that enable informal bargaining and loopholes (Gelb and Clark, cited in Piccolino, 2015a:283). Guarantors also facilitate access for groups that would otherwise be at risk of being excluded by time-consuming, restrictive, distant or discriminatory procedures (Marko, 2015).

A puzzle emerges, however, since a state that uses guarantors with which to ‘see’ its population gives part of its centralised, synoptic view to alternative powerbrokers. These individuals may, benignly or malevolently, ‘interpose their own particular interests’ in their mediation between state and society (Scott, 1998:78). This would therefore seem to be a singular challenge to the legibility that Scott posited as a critical characteristic of state power. So how do we explain a state’s use of guarantors? In the remaining part of this chapter, I therefore review theoretical and empirical literatures to posit three possible explanations. Firstly, that dependence upon guarantors is a sign of weak state capacity, and can be expected in places where the ‘broadcasting’ of state power is feeble. Secondly, and pertinent to the African context, that guarantors are a legacy of indirect rule and continue to play a mediating role into the present because of political economies based on neopatrimonial and hybrid logics. Thirdly, that guarantors are used because they enable trustworthy verification of individuals as social actors, a form of authentication that the state alone cannot provide, and which reinforces notions of belonging and nationhood.

Weak State Capacity

It might be easy to dismiss a weak state explanation for the use of guarantors out of hand since, as I noted above, many ‘modern’, ‘developed’ states utilise forms of testimony, witnessing, counter-signature, and vouching within their systems of official identification. Having a teacher, priest, or lawyer sign the back of one’s passport photograph in the UK to confirm your identity, or permitting a person with no known address to be vouched for on election day as the US, does not make them weak states. However, this may be because they

²³ I note that Szreter and Breckenridge (2012:29) argue that theoretically self-authorisation is not a form of verification. However, the World Bank (2014) accepts that self-declarations may be the only available form of identification.

are regarded as Weber's administratively capable and bureaucratically efficient 'file-making' states, generally able to recognise, identify and document their citizens. The use of guarantors might therefore be explained away in terms of safeguards or double-checking. In contrast, many African states seem to lack Weber's officials, scribes, records and stamps; and the procedures of filing, ordering, classifying and authorising needed for effective legibility. They are not regarded as operating in an 'information-rich context', lacking the ability to 'track the individual body or understand the dynamics of the social body' (Cooper, cited in Breckenridge, 2014:5).

The problems African states have faced in constructing sustainable and comprehensive systems of registration and identification are often subsumed under general accounts of their 'low capacity' and problems 'broadcasting' power over the human and physical environment (Evans et al, 1995; Herbst, 2000).²⁴ Piccolino (2015a; 2015b), for instance, writes that African states' limited registration capabilities can be analysed as an outcome of their weak 'infrastructural power', the ability of state networks to penetrate and coordinate society through logistical and organisational techniques as theorised by Mann (1984, 2008). Explanations for this administrative weakness are given in terms of pre-colonial cultures (such as the endurance of tribal rule); the legacy of colonialism (which prioritised extractive economics, superficial administration and partial politics over the development of sustainable and sustained institutions); or the notion of the state as a mirage or façade (the failure of implantation), hollow (eviscerated by corruption) or hybridised between 'traditional' institutions and 'modern' ones (for instance, Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Olivier de Sardan, 1999; Mamdani, 1996). Rather than being structurally autonomous from society (Forrest, 1988), contemporary African states are characterised by little or no functional separation between politics and the socio-cultural relations of everyday life (Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Ekeh, 1975). In place of the precision, speed and orderliness that characterises Weberian bureaucracy is corruption, nepotism and ambiguity. Widespread patronage and the circumlocution of official channels make it extremely difficult for mundane processes of state to be conducted in technically efficient and politically neutral ways (Van de Walle, 2003). The functioning of the state is interrupted, complicated, dispersed and impeded by a variety of social, political and economic actors who seek to extract personal or collective benefits.

Such generalised images of African states as ineffective, dependent and corrupt are of course unhelpful and inadequate. They are not uninterested in identification or enumeration: Herbst argues that the determination and delineation of 'who belongs' is a central concern of African states (cited in Dorman, 2014:163). Importantly, such readings of weakness

²⁴ Indeed, African states are often regarded as congenitally weak, soft, limited, fragile or otherwise in crisis: see Clapham, 1998; Forrest, 1988; Gros, 1996; Jackson, 2002; Jackson and Rosberg, 1982; Milliken and Krause, 2002; Putzel and Di John, 2012; Rotberg, 2004; and Zartman, 1995. This is part of the conceptualisation of statehood that draws on European historical experiences and the 'OECD state' or colonially derived juridical state, and from which African states are 'deviant' cases. See Boege et al, 2008; Hagmann and Hoehne, 2009; Menkhaus, 2006; Sangmpam, 1993.

perpetuate an idea of a comprehensive, hegemonic, and monolithic ‘state’ that does not stand up to empirical realities, in Africa or elsewhere (Balthasar, 2012; Hagmann and Hoehne, 2009). Rather than attributing weak functionality to the whole ‘state-idea’ (Abrams, 1988), it is important to look closely at ‘the state’ in terms of a whole series of ‘dispersed, networked and polymorphous’ institutions, actors, processes, practices and organisational procedures (Ajana, 2012:855). To that end, we can break down the assignation of ‘weakness’ into discrete assessments of dysfunction, inexperience or scarcity, asking whether the use of guarantors is a pragmatic response to underfunded and ineffective government departments, undertrained personnel, and poor technical infrastructures. For instance, are guarantors used because a particular ministry or programme needs to fill the gaps in its expertise? Is the devolution of legibility to authorised individuals simply cheaper and easier?

Certainly it seems that in some contemporary cases, pragmatism can explain the utilisation of vernacular practices by states that confront gaps and weaknesses as they attempt to update their identification systems. Piccolino (2015a:277) writes that peer testimony was an essential backstop for Benin’s voter registration in the early period of democratisation, as the relevant ministries faced problems arising from the weak economy, extensive corruption, and heritage of weak institutional capacities. When the government initiated a complex and expensive biometric registration in the late 2000s, it experienced serious problems from the fact that many citizens remained undocumented; an administrative census aimed at providing citizens with birth certificates had to be interrupted due to lack of funding, and thus the use of testimony and witnessing continued (ibid:279). In post-conflict Côte d’Ivoire, Piccolino (2015b) similarly explains that the creation of a new biometric voter register also encountered problems from the ‘deficient’ civil registration system and the resultant dearth of birth certificates, leading the government to permit the attestation of citizenship by witnesses before mobile courts (*audience foraines*). Comparable problems have also been encountered in Ghana, a country generally considered to have managed a rather positive development trajectory, but whose births and deaths registry was dogged by underfunding, poorly qualified personnel, and a lack of resources such as computers and transport even into the late 1990s (Breckenridge, 2010:646). When the Ghanaian National Identification Authority embarked on an ambitious programme of biometric identity registration in 2001, it was forced to face up to the fact that very few Ghanaians had birth certificates to prove their citizenship. Instead, writes Breckenridge (ibid):

[T]he Ghanaian state ended up relying on the temporary workers to make a decision about nationality based on discussions with ‘your parents, head of family and/or local traditional leaders’ ... In practice long queues and production pressures meant that those with anything resembling a case for Ghanaian citizenship generally got it.

In this sample of cases, we therefore see how gaps in a state's identity-management infrastructure, in particular the civil register, accumulated over decades of inattention and under-resourcing, force states 'to establish special procedures to allow those who do not carry documents to register, particularly through some form of oral testimony' (Piccolino, 2015b:6). In this thesis, I therefore consider whether the lack of resources, experience, and personnel, poorly formulated bureaucratic processes, or even ineptitude within state institutions explains the use of guarantors in Somaliland's official identification procedures; and whether this constitutes a sufficient reason for the continued prominence of guarantors.

Intermediaries and Hybridity

A second explanation for the use of guarantors for verification can be drawn from the scholarship on intermediaries, brokers, and agents more generally. This is a particularly strong theme in the scholarship on African states, which grapples with the role of seemingly anachronistic 'traditional authorities' (chiefs, elders, clan leaders, headmen, religious leaders, and 'big men') in modern politics. Their involvement with state institutions was consolidated during the colonial period in which much of the day-to-day administration was undertaken by intermediaries embedded in society, often via the mechanisms of indirect rule which either preserved existing authorities or empowered new ones (Herbst, 2000:82–84). This was considered the most efficient and effective means of communicating with and controlling local populations in the face of logistical and financial parsimony. The degree to which colonial officials manipulated and altered existing power structures, and the long-term legacy of these actions on the form and pluralism of such institutions, is subject to extensive debate in the African studies literature (*ibid*). Some studies focus on the 'manufacture' of groups and their chiefs, driven by colonial administrators' predilection for favouring and fortifying one particular line of power to ensure security and control; and through which more fluid forms of mediation and brokerage became codified (Van Dijk and Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, 1999; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). Other areas of scholarship highlight the way that 'traditional' authorities used this interstitial role to boost their own position, accumulating gains from the foreign powers at the cost of being regarded as co-opted and tainted by their own communities (for instance, Mamdani, 1996).

At independence, many African leaders found that they faced the same dilemmas of the imperial administrators: how to extend power over their territories in the face of often-massive geographies yet only partial administrative structures and limited national infrastructures (Herbst, 1998:97). In many countries, the post-independence period was characterised by concerted efforts to modernise state and society, often by breaking with previous power arrangements that were seen as having buttressed colonial rule.²⁵ In the era of the one-party state, many African leaders consolidated power through economic statism,

²⁵ In Somalia, for instance, the focus was very much on 'detrribalising' society under the socialist government of Siyad Barre (Brons, 2001; Samatar, 1998).

centralisation and elite politics (including presidentialism), and authoritarian governance (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997). However, chieftaincy, tribal leadership and kinship politics demonstrated persistence and resilience (Beall, Mkhize and Vawda, 2005; Logan, 2013), and these actors continued to operate at the interface between state and society. Traditional authorities have thus been analysed as part of neopatrimonial and clientelistic social economies in which ‘the business of politics’ is conducted via power-laden, personalised, and ‘infra-institutional’ relations (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:xix); and where effective political actors are those that operate simultaneously in different political spaces (Ekeh, 1975:93).

Neopatrimonialism inspires considerable debate as an explanatory framework for contemporary African politics. Bratton and Van de Walle call personal relationships the ‘foundation and superstructure of political institutions in Africa’, arguing that the logic of patrimonialism provides essential ‘operating codes’ to how power is allocated within the rational-legal institutions of the modern state, and that therefore ‘parallel and unofficial structures may well hold more power and authority than the formal administration’ (1997:62–63). Certainly post-independence states have had to rely upon the variegated category of ‘chiefs’ to broadcast power into rural areas, in a relationship sometimes characterised by ambiguity, jealousy and struggle (Herbst, 1998:173–80). For whilst these leaders draw their authority from ‘tradition’, their legitimacy often comes from effectively managing issues around land tenure, local services, and conflict resolution, and extracting benefits from the central state for their community (Logan, 2013). This also means that they do not necessarily function in the ‘traditional’ idiom. Eggen (2011:320) notes, for instance, how some chiefs in Malawi ‘proudly presented themselves as “civil servants”, an administrative gatekeeper role in which they felt they ‘represented’ the government (although without the attendant accountability).²⁶ Since the introduction of multi-party politics in the early 1990s, new attention has consequently been paid to these ‘traditional’ institutions, with the literature declaring a ‘resurgence’ of their relevance and authority, not only in terms of their prominence within local configurations of power, but also as units of analysis (Englebert, 2002; Goodfellow and Lindemann, 2013; Logan, 2009, 2013; Santos, 2006; Williams, 2004). This new focus moves away from weak state accounts, seeing traditional authorities and non-state actors not as aberrations, substitutes or interim solutions for developing state processes, but as meaningful, resilient and legitimate sources of political order.²⁷

²⁶ Similarly, Buur and Kyed (2006) also argue that traditional leaders in Mozambique act as both state agents and representatives of local communities at the crux of the ‘tradition’-‘modernity’ boundary. Logan proposes that chiefs and elected officials, instead of occupying their own domains, are often regarded as ‘common players in a single, integrated political system, rather than opponents in a sharply bifurcated one’ (2009:103). She argues that both kinds of leaders are assessed by the same criteria by citizens, an interpretation supported by the work of Karlstrom in Uganda (cited in Logan, 2009:12–23) and Williams (2004) in South Africa, who recount that their informants see traditional leaders and elected councillors as part of the same spectrum of political activity.

²⁷ See, for instance, Acemoglu et al, 2013; Buur and Kyed, 2006; Goodfellow and Lindemann, 2013; Logan, 2009; Meagher, 2012; Santos, 2006; Williams, 2004.

Identity guarantors might therefore be understood less as stopgaps for weak state administration, and more as integral parts of the forms of governance that have emerged in the post-colonial period. Traditional leaders, chiefs, and other societal actors are present and powerful, and thus must be accommodated within bureaucratic structures. Not only does contracting such agents as verifiers acknowledge their locally legitimate role, it enhances the state's ability to 'see' the population because of their proximity to citizens. Such an interpretation fits with the popular conceptual frame of 'hybridity', which views customary forms as adaptable and adaptive institutions that co-exist with the processes, agencies and norms of the liberal democratic state.²⁸ As Boege et al write:

Dominant approaches to state-building today rest on a narrow understanding of the sources of our own political and social order. The reality is that state institutions co-exist with and depend on the family, religious, economic and cultural institutions. (2008:17)

We see this hybridity in the neopatrimonialist approaches to the African state, particularly in terms of the way that personal relations penetrate the rational-legal system to create a 'mixture of two co-existing, partly interwoven, types of domination' (Erdmann and Engel, 2007:105). However, emerging scholarship regards hybridity as more than co-existence, 'nesting together' (Menkhaus, 2006), 'mixed government' (Sklar, cited in Englebert, 2002) or 'institutional multiplicity'²⁹ (Putzel and Di John, 2012). Instead, it is characterised by synergy – what Boege et al call 'a genuine partnership' (2008:8) – or even synthesis. This analytical precision about the way that we use hybridity is important because otherwise we risk conceptual stretch.³⁰ Hybridity is not, as Goodfellow warns, 'more or less any situation in which non-state actors play a significant role' (2013). Rather, like a hybrid car, the parts must work together to gain momentum: each may have their own function, but they are part of an integrated system. Such synergism takes place in a diverse range of sites, including different processes, institutions and actors.

These theoretical considerations fit with other themes in the literature on states and state-building, for instance, those which emphasise the interrelationship between actors and institutions of the social system and the 'state-system' (Abrams, 1988).³¹ In such readings,

²⁸ Hybridity has become a popular concept in the social sciences: indeed, Meagher has described it as representing a 'Gestalt shift' in the analysis of political order (2012:1076). The term can be found in studies as diverse as the relationship between hard and soft law in the European Union (such as Maher, 2007); the colonially bequeathed legal hybridity of African states (Lawan, 2014; Santos, 2006); or the analysis of patrimonial capitalism in the post-Cold War economies of the former Soviet Union (Robinson, 2013). In political theory, hybridity emerged as a lens on statehood as a riposte to the state failure paradigm that read African political order as 'pathological' (Hagmann and Peclard, 2010) – although it is not a new concept in African studies, having been used to describe power relations under colonialism (Iliffe, 2007).

²⁹ This is a theoretical framework that challenges the idea that there is only one authority providing the 'rules of the game' (North, 1990). Rather, like Ekeh's 1975 conceptualisation of domain mobility, actors are able to move 'strategically from one institutional universe to another' (Crisis States Research Centre, cited in Balthasar, 2012:23).

³⁰ Brubaker and Cooper (2000:1) describe this in their influential article on identity as what happens when a word 'tends to mean too much (when understood in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak sense), or nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity)'.

³¹ Scholars such as Mitchell (1991, 2006), Painter (2006, 2011) and Risse (2011) all criticise the idea of the state as a monolithic body apart from society. Migdal (2001) has likewise influentially argued that the state exists *in* society, not apart from it. Similarly Frödin (2010) critiques 'objectivist' readings of the state, arguing that the state is not a coherent

‘political’ and ‘social’ domains are regarded as co-constituted and interconnected by acts (and actors) from different milieux. Additionally, we can make connections with the scholarship that tries to break down the ‘invidious distinction’ between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ (Bendix, cited in Galvan and Sil, 2007:3). Guarantors are therefore neither of the traditional/informal/social landscape *or* the modern/formal/state one, or floating ‘somewhere in the middle’, but one of many different actors in a heterogeneous landscape of power and authority (Van Dijk and Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, 1999:5).

These ideas can productively be applied to the role of guarantors and vernacular verification in Somaliland, especially because Somaliland is described as a textbook case of a ‘hybrid political order’ (for instance, Balthasar, 2012; Boege et al, 2008; Hoehne, 2013; Renders, 2007, 2012; Walls and Kibble, 2010). The nature of the Somaliland HPO is often quickly ascribed, but under-theorised and evidenced, remaining at the level of a general systemic designation. By focusing in on the syncretic role³² of the caaqil, the clan elder who typically undertakes verification in formal identification processes, we not only understand more about the mechanisms of these intercessory relationships, but also augment the hybridity literature with fine empirical detail about the interoperability of different norms and rules, and the different levels at which hybridity works.

Unpacking Verification: Trust and Relationality

This account of hybridity certainly seems to be persuasive in explaining the prominence of the guarantee and testimony of particular actors in developing identification systems. However, like the weak state argument, it does not fully address the act of verification, but merely explains the institutional space for vouchsafers. A third explanatory approach is therefore to unpack identification as a set of processes and ideas connected to relationality and trust; and thus to go deeper into what is meant by verification.

Earlier in this chapter, I defined official identities as the standardised biographies recognised by the state, designed to permit stable and predictable recognition. These constructions are not about the essential ‘self’ of personal identity, what Ricoeur called the ‘*ipse*’ or reflexive self, but privilege the ways in which bodies are ‘read’ and named in order to objectify the self as something that can be classified, interacted with, and administered: the ‘*idem*’ or sameness self (cited in Gutwirth, 2009:124–25). The answer to ‘who are you?’ thus seems not to reveal who you *really* are (i.e. an ‘essential’ self) or a tautologous self-presentation (I am I),³³ but a construction of signs and synecdoches that offers a ‘front stage’ persona relevant to the time, place and interlocutor (Goffman, cited in Higgs, 2009). In the

administrative and coerces apparatus but a series of institutions that exist insofar as they are ‘systematically activated’ in social relations.

³² For instance, Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal (1999:21) describes some kinds of contemporary chiefs as a ‘syncretic’ leader who brings together ‘antagonistic forces stemming from different state models, bureaucracies and world views’.

³³ A formulation from Higgs, 2009:347, drawing on Caplan, 2001:51.

case of state identification, this persona is supposed to be the official identity as recorded in files and ledgers.

However, we can problematise this thin reading of identity, and argue instead for seeing identity as highly contextual and responsive.³⁴ Amoore, quoting Hall, writes that ‘there can be no singular “identity”, but only multiple “unstable points of identification” that temporarily and arbitrarily “position” us’ (2006:22). Though these points might be ‘permanent’ – such as in the case of biometric data-points or facts of birth as reckoned in genealogies – the way in which various biographical details are brought in and out of relief depends on different forms of positioning. This is thus to conceptualise identity as relational, drawing on Gutwirth (2008), Lyon (2001), and others who argue that identity ‘is not something that resides in individuals but in the social interactions in which they take part’ (Higgs, 2009:346). As Marx nicely puts it, ‘we are all ambulatory autobiographies’ (2001:314), which can be read and interacted with.

The consequence of this conceptualisation is thus to see identification as an interpersonal process of recognition (Taylor, 1989) in which certain distinctive attributes (physical, social and cognitive) are taken as a sign of a particular person, through physiognomic interpretation, the reading of cues, gestures and other symbols, the performance of credentials or status, or the presentation of artefacts or tokens (Goffman, 2010; Higgs, 2009). Atick (2013) has argued that ‘how identity fits into communities significantly informs ID knowledge’, and that linking identity credentials to reputation (through social memory, ‘identity gossip’, institutional reputations, and family history) makes identity useful, credible and powerful. As noted above, the World Bank identified social reputation as part of the ‘metadata’ available for identification in situations of patchy or non-existent paperwork, stating that:

Identity is what binds a person to his or her reputation, and reputation is what earns that person trust within the community [...] The cycle of identification does not end. As we conduct more actions, the volume of our reputational data increases and our trust level is continually adjusted through the judgment of the prevailing social, moral, and legal codes. (World Bank, 2014:9)

This ‘reputational data’ is produced and reinforced by a person’s actions, and can be used to identify them. Giddens (1991:80), drawing on Goffman, calls such relations ‘facework’ commitments that depend upon co-presence in time and space, as opposed to the ‘faceless’, anonymous relations of abstract systems. Such identification not only names a person but includes an implicit assessment of trustworthiness: ‘A’ engages in an interaction with person ‘B’ only if they know who they are and can be sure that they will do what they say they will (see Hardin, 2006). At its most basic, trust is the belief that someone, free to act in any way they choose, will act in an expected or desired way that is beneficial or at least benign

³⁴ These different ways of reading identity led Brubaker and Cooper to famously decry the concept’s stretching (2000; see also Abdelal et al, 2006).

towards the trusting party at some relevant future time (Gambetta, 2000; Hardin, 2006). Trust is necessary because of ignorance and uncertainty about other people's behaviour, and the possibility of their not acting in expected ways (Gambetta, 2000:218). In this sense, trust is essential for co-existence in communities since none of the members 'can know each other's future actions but all of whom must in some measure *rely* upon each other's future actions' (2000:83; my emphasis). Since perfect knowledge of the actions of others is impossible, effective social co-existence must therefore rest on some relatively well-founded expectations about the conduct of free others. The belief that others will act in particular ways draws on trust: in this way it is 'a policy apt for conditions where knowledge is unavailable', and for 'coping with uncertainty over time' (Dunn, 2000:85, 73).

Vouching

It follows that verification also involves assessments of trustworthiness and relationality, since it is the process of corroborating a person's claim to be who they say they are, and thus evaluates whether someone is speaking the truth. We see this strongly in 'vouching', a form of 'facework' in which someone (the vouchsafer) not only confirms that the name and other biographical details of a person (X) are correct, but guarantees that they are so. Vouching requires the vouchsafer to verify the identity claim of X and, in doing so put their own reputation down as assurance. Scott Brooks, whose ethnographic work within the amateur basketball league in Philadelphia I introduced in Chapter 1, has described vouching as involving a loan of a vouchsafer's credibility – 'to risk losing some respect or status by putting their reputations on the line to bolster a friend's status' (2004:83). Brooks' entrée into the guarded world of the basketball court was facilitated by the endorsement of the coach Chuck, who claimed Brooks was 'good' – in other words, trustworthy and reliable. Trust and verification are thus entwined in the practice of vouching.

Vouching is one of the practices that I term 'vernacular' verification in this thesis. It may take place in everyday and unremarkable settings, such as a basketball court, and by non-authoritative persons whose guarantee is given through friendship or professional acquaintance. However, as I noted earlier in this chapter, vouching can also be undertaken by guarantors with some kind of official or authoritative status. This suggests that a third explanation for the use of guarantors by states is because guarantors *qua* vouchsafers are able to undertake the 'facework' that bureaucrats cannot. Teachers, lawyers, and religious leaders trusted with vouching for a person's identity have bonds with other citizens and residents. They are not faceless bureaucrats who see only the identical Fordist citizen-workers of high modernism, or the 'blank pieces of paper' upon which states seek to write (Scott, 1998: 336–41), but socially embedded actors with relationships to those they are verifying. Crucially, through acts of vouching, guarantors situate people as individuals within social contexts, making them visible not via the centralised administrative sight to which modern statecraft aspires, but through what I term 'metic legibility': the ways of

seeing that come from what Scott formulated as ‘*mētis*’, the plastic, local and divergent practices of knowledge distinct from the monolithic, sterile and static knowledge of statecraft (Scott, 1998:323).³⁵

Hence we begin to open up why states incorporate guarantors in their identification infrastructures. Guarantors are not (only) stopgaps in otherwise weak or patchy capabilities, or traditional intermediaries in hybridised political terrains, but essential parts of ‘seeing like a state’. Through the testimony of individuals in society, the distant bureaucratic gaze is brought into proximity with the citizens that states need to see: not only can a registered person be unambiguously attached to their ‘data double’ (Haggerty and Ericson, cited in Donovan and Martin, 2012), and distinguished from other people across time and space, but they can be positioned within relevant social fields and frames of meaning. The use of guarantors thus enhances surveillance through information-gathering and corroboration at the micro-social level, and enables states to emulate administrative legibility.

Authentication

These practices of vouching and endorsement have another critical function in state-society relations: the reproduction of norms and narratives about inclusion, authenticity, and belonging. Guarantors do not merely verify the identity of registrants and citizens, but in many cases also *authenticate* them. At its most basic, authentication is ‘the process of establishing confidence in the truth of a claim’ (Harbitz and Kentala, 2015:6), but I understand it as more than corroboration. Rather, authentication is about locating a person within the category or group to which they belong: as Caplan and Torpey capture it, “The question ‘who is this person?’ leaches constantly into the question ‘what kind of person is this?’” (2001:3) Authentication does not verify X against herself (1-to-1 verification), therefore but locates X within a shared identity – what I conceptualise in this thesis as 1-*in*-many verification.

Official identities like nationality and ethnicity have hegemonic narratives and rules that determine whether someone authentically belongs. In some cases, these narratives of ‘authenticity’ are used as a political tool for the casting of an ‘internal other’ (Dorman, Hammett and Nugent, 2007:10). We have seen this in, for instance, racialised notions of ‘Zimbabwean-ness’, Katangan citizenry, and the Hutu ‘nation’ (ibid); and in the autochthonous versus ‘allogeneous’ distinction in Côte d’Ivoire that has led to great grievance and exclusion (Bah, 2010; Marshall-Fratani, 2007). These boundaries of belonging are reproduced every time the paperwork of citizenship, nationality, and voter eligibility is made, and are often encoded into these artefacts. Cutolo, for instance, has written about

³⁵ For Scott, his lengthy explanation of *mētis* serves to reinforce his observations about the controlling and appropriating impulses of bureaucratic administration and capitalism. He writes that *mētis* resists the assimilation project of statecraft, and hence, in that utopian design, will be replaced by ‘standardized formulas legible only to the center’ (1998:336).

how the obligatory ‘foreigner’ ID card introduced in Côte d’Ivoire ‘represented an unprecedented materialization of nationality in the public space’ (2010:530), marking out ‘strangers’ from nationals in the emerging ideological narrative of Ivoirité.

Processes of verification and identification do not only distinguish citizens and non-citizens, however. As in Côte d’Ivoire, applicants for forms of ID may find that their claims to be members of a particular group are subject to authentication tests – they must prove not only that they are the person they say they are, but also that they are *really* of a certain kind: a citizen, a kinsman, a descendent. In his study on Nigerian certificates of origin, Fourchard (2015) reveals that applicants must ‘prove’ their indigeneity by revealing authentic knowledge about their place of birth. An Ibadan official told him: ‘You first give your family name. We know common names of true Ibadan man. You need to know the name of your family compound (*ilé*), and its exact location (the name of the street is not sufficient)’ (2015:46–47). Fourchard writes:

If the official is not convinced of the applicant’s status, more tricky questions are asked to check whether the applicant is a true indigene or not. For instance [...] “What are the main traditional festivals in Ibadan? Where is the shrine in Okebadan? Could you recite a few verses of an Oriki [poem]?” (ibid)

He notes that this means that applicants must have a name and ancestral narrative that fits officials’ expectations; those without these must abandon hope of gaining a certificate or must try to invent a life story that will pass muster (2015:51, 54). This therefore reinforces the certificate as a technique of indigeneity since only ‘indigenes’ will be able to manufacture the requisite authenticity. In post-secession South Sudan, Marko has also shown how, following the ‘ethnic turn’ in its citizenship regime, voters in the referendum had to demonstrate that they were a member of an indigenous tribe; if they lacked sufficient credentials, ‘identifiers, usually old ladies from a variety of tribes, had the task to tell, if someone is really a Sudanese [sic]’ (2015:673). In the citizenship office established after 2010, applicants must give their clan name, and provide a witness; and, if needed, also provide a ‘recommendation letter’ from a traditional chief as ‘decisive evidence’ that they are truly a South Sudanese and a trustworthy citizen (ibid:674).³⁶

Such interpretive powers can have significant consequences, as Lochery’s work on the screening of Kenyan Somalis in 1989–90 shows. There, clan elders were central to verification: their assessment of whether someone was really from a particular clan was seemingly as important as the presentation of documentary evidence (Lochery, 2012:629–30). She writes that this process assumed that ‘the elders could provide “living testimony” to the genuineness of citizenship’ (ibid). The screening was criticised as humiliating and politicised: although the panels were supposed to be representative, they were underscored

³⁶ Marko (2015:679) also notes that in addition to proof of correct ethnic heritage, applicants may be subject to questions about their race – whether they are ‘black enough’ or ‘too black’ – adding another layer to the narrative of authentic South Sudanese.

by clan politics, meaning that being from the ‘wrong’ lineage could lead to in-authentication (and the failure of citizenship claims).³⁷ Vernacular verification is therefore not necessarily an impartial act, and it is possible that guarantors will give false testimony for political or financial gain, or to service nepotism and the lubrication of connections (see Marko, 2015: 676, 680).

These three cases demonstrate that processes ostensibly about verifying someone’s identity are embedded in deeper questions about citizenship and belonging. Authentication is maintained by narratives and their gatekeepers – in accounts of African politics, this is often the figure of the ‘traditional authority’ acting as intermediary between citizen and state, who acts as a final word on the authenticity of someone as a particular ‘kind of person’. This third explanatory approach to the role of guarantors in state systems of identification thus turns on the issues of trust, relationality, and authenticity. Not only are guarantors useful and credible agents in the verification process because of their own willingness to give their name as credit, but through them, the state has a more direct connection to its citizens. Moreover, the use of testifiers enables state administrators to not merely verify identity but also to assess whether applicants ‘belong’ by triangulating whom they are related to, which group/clan/tribe they are a member of, and therefore whether they are a ‘good’ citizen. In so doing, the incorporation of vernacular practices works as a technique of inclusion and exclusion, reinforcing narratives of authentic belonging and bounded citizenship. In this thesis, I argue that these are powerful reasons for the use of guarantors by states, and thus explore how authentication by guarantors reproduces histories and images of what it means to be a Somalilander.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I examine how the Somaliland state, through the development of its official identification system, is trying to make its population ‘legible’. To do so, it must address its historical ‘verification problem’. In this chapter, I have looked closely at the meaning and function of verification within processes of identification. Drawing on theoretical and empirical material from a diverse range of scholarship, I have shown that ‘vernacular’ verification – practices of testimony, vouching and guarantee – are a feature of most, if not all, official identification systems, but are critical in states that lack comprehensive identity-management infrastructures. Three interlocking factors of weak institutional capacities, hybrid political logics, and narratives of authentic belonging can explain the importance of these practices. In each of these areas, vernacular practices, part of the synthetic assemblage of the identity architecture, provide pragmatic and symbolic solutions to the verification problem.

³⁷ Lochery notes that these practices of clan-elder verification have endured into contemporary Kenya, with ‘vetting committees’ assessing applications for identity cards for Kenyan Somalis (2012: 636; see also Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, 2007: 22–23).

This chapter sets up the framework of inquiry for the following substantive chapters by elucidating two main conceptual findings. I have argued that official identity is not simply an administrative fabrication as theorised in conventional accounts of the bureaucratic state, but a negotiated category that is rooted in social frames of meaning. Effective verification is consequently more than checking biographic facts: it is authentication, situating the ‘1’ in the ‘many’, in a way that draws on the resources, norms and actors of the identity architecture. In the next chapter, I develop this argument through an exploration of the local, informal and quotidian practices of identification that constitute the vernacular meshwork of the identity architecture in Somaliland.

Chapter 3

Genealogy in Practice

Identification and Situatedness in the Everyday

[T]he multiple facets of social reality are inscribed in names. (Zonabend cited in Bestard-Camps, 1991:31)

Transformative power resides not in the map, of course, but in the power possessed by those who deploy the perspective of that particular map (Scott, 1998:87)

David Simpson describes situatedness as ‘being in place’ and ‘knowing one’s place’ (2002:2). These two ideas animate my discussion in this chapter, which explores the ‘genealogical idiom’ of Somaliland society, and reflects upon everyday forms of identification and, specifically, identity verification. I consider the processes of relationality and triangulation, which work to situate people within a complex biographic system whereby ‘one’s place’ is a node in a many-place network. My research in Somaliland suggests that social processes of identification rely on almost continual relativising; and that access, favours and opportunities all depend upon verification of these relationships, most notably through triangulation and ‘vouching’.

This chapter is organised thematically around the norms and practices of everyday identification, which constitute the vernacular resources of Somaliland’s identity architecture. I discuss the forms of knowledge, norms and values that situate and contextualise people in terms of vertical lineage and horizontal networks, which I term the ‘genealogical idiom’. Rather than the ‘idem’ (sameness) self that official identity is concerned with (see Chapter 2), these forms of ‘facework’ presume identity to be relational and contextual. I explicate the notions of trust and authenticity that arise from this, in order to show how these ideas are integral parts of the identification regime in Somaliland, in which the confirmation of identity entails a complementary process of authentication as a Somalilander. These claims of authenticity obviously draw boundaries around in-groups and out-groups, and in this chapter I set out how the structural logic of genealogy and clanship reinforces the marginalisation of so-called ‘minority’ clans, people with ‘illegitimate’ parentage, and, to some extent, women. In this chapter, I also examine closely the way that people say they use intermediaries and vouchsafers, including caaqils: important authorities in socio-political life, and the guarantors most often called upon by the state to verify identity. The caaqil’s genealogical situating of an applicant for identity documentation is crucial to the production of civic and voter status, and, as I will discuss in the following chapters, has been systematised into the official verification process for voter and national ID.

Genealogy as Legibility

As Walls notes early on in his book, ‘any examination of political development or of peace- and state-building in Somali territories must be grounded in an understanding of customary Somali socio-political systems’ (2014:31). This is not as straightforward as it seems, however. Clan and kinship – the basis of that customary system – are complex institutions with multiple meanings over space and time; and the scholarship on Somali state and society has grappled with trying to explain these sufficiently and appropriately. The now-standard anthropological account provided by I M Lewis has been criticised for perpetuating an idea of the unity of Somalis based in nomadic pastoralist culture without reflection on class and race (Besteman, 1996a; 1998); and for ‘the fiction of a self-reproducing Somali society, rooted in a rigid kinship system and with traditions unaffected by historical process’ (Aidid, 2015; see also Mansur in Ali, 1995). The functionalist ‘clan paradigm’ that Lewis drew from his observations of nomadic pastoralist lifestyles has now been joined by accounts that demonstrate the significant cleavages of class, gender, occupation, race, status and language in Somali society (Besteman, 1996a; 1996b; Luling, 2002), but debates about the essentialisation and reification of clan life continue (see Aidid, 2015). Luling, who called such debates ‘barren’, suggests that a productive focus is instead *how* clan is developed and used in different contexts (2006:478).

This is therefore my approach in this thesis. My position in this chapter is that the social practices of contemporary Somaliland society (particularly those of situating, connecting and vouching), though they may index the norms of Somali pastoralist society, are rather, as Kapteijns notes, the artefacts of ‘completely new political, social, and economic realities’ (1991:13). Certainly in Hargeysa, clans are one only part of people’s everyday lives. Religion is a central part of Somaliland life, and the rituals, ceremonies and celebrations of Islam punctuate the quotidian rhythm of everyone’s lives. People are of course also shaped by, and identify with, collective formations along economic and political lines (such as class), and there is a territorial dimension to belonging, particularly in the cities (Barnes, 2006). However, lineage politics and clan relations do also seem to be a significant aspect of the way that identities are negotiated and identification undertaken. This does not mean that they are ‘rigid’ or ‘traditional’. Indeed, it is clear from empirical accounts of Somali socio-political life that kinship and clanship is valorised in some settings and by some actors, and denigrated in others, as I show in this chapter and in Chapter 6.

As structuring logics, however, genealogy, lineage, and clanship do seem to be standardised and taken-for-granted categories of meaning that have can be used by various actors to organise political and social life. Indeed, as I argue in Chapter 4, genealogy – in terms of personal lineage and clan identity – has had a profound shaping effect on the emerging Somaliland nation-state, in terms of citizenship and contemporary political relations between different groups in Somaliland society. At the everyday level, these aspects of clan membership are invoked when needed and in ways that demonstrate fluidity and diversity.

At the same time, this does suggest that ideas about lineage, descent, naming, and relationality that come from the ‘genealogical idiom’ are shared and systematised forms of knowledge. Certainly, in the way my informants discussed these issues, genealogy seems to be a ‘grid of knowability’ that helps to make identity intelligible and legible, and which provides a cognitive map of the relationships between people to enable ‘wayfinding’ (O’Neill, 1991). It is the way that these ideas and practices work as the basis of identification, and specifically authentication, that I draw out in this chapter.

Narrating Identity

At its most basic, a genealogy is a list of names. In Somaliland, a person typically has a triad of names that constitute their given name, their father’s first name and their grandfather’s first name. These three names are in fact the beginning of a much longer chain of names that constitute a person’s patrilineal genealogy, and in which one’s own identity is inscribed.¹ For example, a child of Ahmed, and grandchild of Ibrahim, might be Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim (male) or Quman Ahmed Ibrahim (female). Mohamed’s child might then be Omar Mohamed Ahmed (Ibrahim ...); Quman’s child would take the names of her husband – there is no Omar Quman Ahmed, for instance.

In this way, each person is embedded not only in a line of patrilineal descent, but also a web of blood relationships: from one founding ancestor comes multiple branches and shoots.² Someone’s personal genealogy is therefore but a small branch of the ‘tree’ of the clan system in Somaliland. The significant nodes represented by key forefathers are called *jilbo* (sg. *jilib*), which literally mean ‘knees’, and are used to refer to the points of clan and sub-clan segmentation.³ By recalling these in the recounting of their name and those of their fathers, Somalis give also the history of their family, their lineage and ultimately their clan, since five or so generations make up a lineage, several lineages a sub-clan, several of these a clan until ultimately one reaches the clan’s founding father (Lewis, 1961:127–37; Luling, 2006:473). Genealogy is thus a historical catalogue of key progenitors.

And yet genealogy does more than simply record one’s ancestors, since in the branches and offshoots of blood and marriage come multiple lines of relations. In Somali, the name for genealogy is *tol*, which comes from the verb ‘to sew together’. This etymology is suggestive of the binding together of individuals within webs of interpersonal relations. This interweaving creates networks of reciprocity that constitute an important part of the quotidian life that I

¹ The first name is given personally to the child. The second name or surname is that of the father’s first name, whose own surname – the first name of his father – becomes the traditional third name, and so on. For an example, see the recitation by Nabiil on page 74 or the example of Rooble’s lineage on pages 179–80. Note that the common proclivity for nicknames – often useful for distinguishing those with an identical triad of names – falls out of the formal genealogy: though someone may be called by another moniker for all their life, children do not inherit this name.

² Hence the term ‘lineage segmentation’ is often used to describe genealogical systems of this kind, and is favoured by Lewis (1961:7; 1994:19).

³ Luling suggests this might reflect the Arab tradition of figuring kinship as the human body (2006:474). It may be that it refers to ‘joint’ more broadly, giving an image of an articulated mechanism (natural or not) in which there are key nodes of connection – an appealing metaphorical device, since it captures the flexibility of the Somali clan system.

observed in Hargeysa, and which form the bedrock of social relations and a structure of predictability that is essential in the context of Somaliland's legal limbo.

In Somaliland, the practice of reciting one's genealogy is known as *abtirsiino*, which means literally 'counting fathers' but which is often translated as genealogy or lineage (Lewis, 1994). Designed for the infrequent yet vitally important encounters in pastoralist life, two individuals meeting would be able to recite their *abtirsiino* in order to establish what relationship exists between them, permitting strangers to find the point of connection (Lewis, 1994). Counting back to find the node at which lineage branches come together, the degrees of separation can be deducted, and hence obligations or sanctions, terms of marriage or inheritance, and grounds for friendship or feud can all be reckoned (Gardner with Warsame, 2004:154). This reading of genealogy thus works in tandem with customary legal decisions and the pragmatic configurations of alliance on which Somali pastoral clanship traditionally depended. Lewis argued that descent gives each person an 'exact place within society'; in doing so, 'most corporate activities are contingent upon it ... and politics stem from it' (1994:19): blood connections are not only preferable for emotional security, but essential for physical protection and welfare. This account of the *abtirsiino* does of course draw on the pastoralist paradigm, which is of less immediate relevance in the urban environment. As Dacaa, a researcher and activist who I interviewed in Hargeysa, put it: 'You need *abtirsiino* in rural areas to catch imposters. [You must] narrate your lineage' (Interview, 2014). Dacaa's implication was that this is less necessary in city life where face-to-face encounters are more common, and people are bound together in multiple networks of associational life. However, even in Hargeysa, certain kinds of identification still draw on what Cassanelli has termed 'thinking and acting genealogically' (2010:56), as I demonstrate here and in the following chapters.

Many Somalis do therefore learn their personal lineage at a young age, so that throughout life they can recite as many as twenty or so generations of paternal names back to the founding ancestor of their clan.⁴ Idil, a young woman recently returned to Hargeysa from the diaspora, told me: 'I remember I was five years old when I learnt the names. I knew them all – even now. It's burnt into your brain so that you know it your whole life' (Interview, 2013). However, none of my Hargeysa interlocutors said that they used genealogical reckoning in their quotidian encounters in the city. It is a handy mnemonic for ancestry, used to reveal genealogical closeness or distance in the present day, but one's *abtirsiino* is not widely known – or shared. Inshaar, a young IT graduate who I talked at length with about this, described one's *abtirsiino* as a 'privilege':

⁴ Of course, because it is a patrilineal reckoning, women's names do not appear in the *abtirsiino* and common ancestors may only appear higher in the list or not at all, but boys and girls appear to learn it just the same (Tawfiq, interview, 2012). This issue of gendered elision is discussed later in the chapter.

When you meet someone who knows you but not well, then maybe they say, 'are you the son of Mohamed?' You use that kind of information as a privilege. And you say 'yes I am Inshaar Mohamed' as a confirmation that you are that person. But strangers do not ask you because they don't know you. ... That kind of information is only for people who know you. (Interview, 2014b)

Inshaar here explains that one's genealogical biography is for those who 'know' you, who are related, and for whom this information is meaningful. However, whilst the string of paternal names may be 'insider' information, the *abtirsiino* is only one part of the broader genealogical idiom that includes lineage, clan identity and family obligations, and which can work as a powerful form of situatedness.

'Of the Clans I Am Caught Between'⁵

These conventions around the *abtirsiino*, and the way in which it works as an undercurrent to identification, have important implications for women's status in Somaliland. Women do, of course, have lines of genealogical descent via their fathers and their father's fathers, and so on; and mothers are arguably a very strong identity within the clan, because lineages (and hence clan strength) are derived through the *bax* (uterine) lineages (Dacaad, interview, 2014). Women do therefore have a personal lineage to narrate. However, women's own names are not passed on in the *abtirsiino*, and women in this sense are completely elided from the genealogies that are learnt and reproduced.

Within the formal structure of genealogy, therefore, women's identities are read only in terms of their relationship to men: who is their father? Who is their husband? This is related to women's interstitial role in the clan system. Whilst women's primary clan identity is that of their father's, upon marriage a woman becomes a 'guest' of her husband's clan. Her children, and particularly her sons, will be of their father's clan, meaning mothers and their children do not share the same clan. Women therefore have an ambivalent status within their own (father's) clan since their sons are likely to be members of another *mag*-paying group – and thus potentially enemies (Lewis, 1994; Gardner with Warsame, 2004). Women are thus assumed to have conflicting loyalties, leading Ifrax, a prominent civil society leader in her fifties, to declare that 'we [Somali women] don't have any clan identity. We are between clans' (Interview, 2014). This is one of the reasons why so few women have been elected in Somaliland.⁶ 'They [the clan] always question the loyalty, where does she belong to. So that makes it difficult for a woman to fully participate,' said Nasteho, one of the trailblazing women who kickstarted Hargeysa's vibrant civil society (Interview, 2012).⁷

⁵ From a poem recited by Dudi Ahmed to Siham Rayale in Rayale, 2013:9.

⁶ The Quranic proscription on female leadership is also cited as an important factor.

⁷ On the changing roles of Somali women in history, see also Abdi, 2007; Abdullahi, 2007, 2010; Ahmed, 1999; Aidid, 2010; Gardner and El Bushra, 2004; Jama, 1994, 2007; Kapteijns, 1994, 2009; Rayale, 2012, 2013; Timmons, 2004; Tungaraza, 2008; Van Hauwermeiren, 2012; Warsame, 2002.

Notwithstanding this, women's interstitiality has theoretical advantages. Their cross-clan positionality (in which they are connected to the clans of their father, their husband, their daughter-in-law and their son-in-law) gives them a much broader network of significant relationships than men, spanning several different lineage and clan divisions (Gardner with Warsame, 2004:163).⁸ These can be useful in everyday life as I discuss below. Hargeysa women are also seeking to claim narratives of their identity that emphasise agency rather than chattel-like subjectivity (Ahmed, 1995).⁹ Nonetheless, it is the case that as a form of legibility, genealogy simplifies and generalises, and can fix people in unfavourable relationships of power, as many women in Somaliland find.

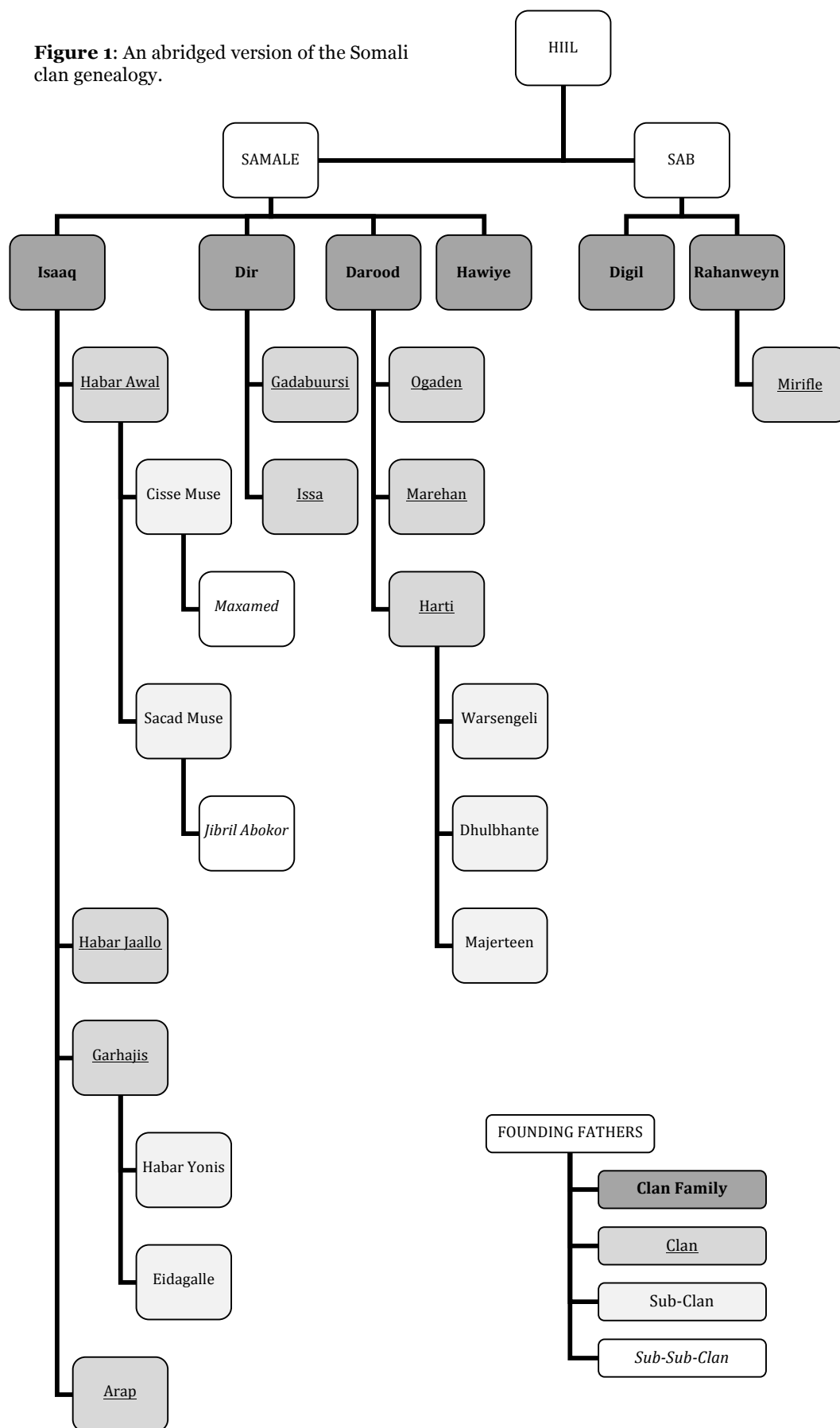
'Reading' Clan

The complex considerations involved in genealogically writ identities mean that clan identities are also complicated performances that have a range of scripts. Many of my interlocutors claimed that clan is not foregrounded in encounters and interactions. Gardner and Warsame wrote in 2004 that 'Under normal circumstances ... it would be considered rude and provocative for people to refer explicitly to their own or others' clan identity' (2004:154). In the years since then, clan politics has become much more conspicuous in Somaliland, and people try hard to avoid allegations of *qabiilism* ('tribalism'). A number of my interviewees were adamant that asking about clan suggests that you are someone who cares about it in a competitive or political way, which is a 'tribalist' way of thinking. Whilst taking pride in your own clan is valued, it seems that is just 'not done' to bring out clan affiliations in public (Sagal, interview, 2014). Indeed, Ifrax and Inshaar both argued that it is 'shameful' to ask directly about clan, with Inshaar adding that he thought it was unprofessional and even strange to do so (Ifrax, interview, 2014; Inshaar, interview, 2014a). Inshaar, a Hargeysa University graduate running an IT business, thought that older generations often do ask directly about clan, using it to identify people, but that for younger people, particularly in the city, this is not appropriate (ibid). In contrast, Ifrax, a professional in her forties or fifties, claimed that her generation do not make inquiries about clan, but that the young people sometimes use where people are from to determine clan (Interview, 2014). These two accounts show the different stories people tell about the importance of clan. It also shows that, even if the social conventions around discussing clan are complicated, it is still a relevant frame of meaning.

⁸ For this reason, women have traditionally played roles as go-betweens, leveraging influence on both sides should conflict arise. As the Somali novelist Nuruddin Farah has put it, 'women are aware of the importance of the multiplicity of connections the warring communities have, seeing themselves now as mothers to children of one family, now as daughters of another, and on remarriage, as mothers to offspring from yet another lineage' (cited in Affi, 2004:106).

⁹ For instance, women activists in Somaliland are interrogating the linkage between women's status and tradition, and engaging in debates over Quranic interpretation of female roles (for instance, about female leadership) as well as customary norms (for instance, regarding inheritance and divorce) (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2012; see also McGown, 2004).

Figure 1: An abridged version of the Somali clan genealogy.



Source: Balthasar, 2012:334 (adapted from Lewis, 1961); my illustration.

However, just because it is not openly discussed does not mean that clan identity is not useful or relevant. A number of my interlocutors emphasised that clan is, in many ways, the most significant basis for identification because ‘everybody has it’ and ‘everybody knows it’ (Muxudin, interview, 2014). In the absence of a comprehensive formal system of official identification (as discussed in Chapter 4), clan identity is considered useful and valuable when trying to locate a person, and in key social encounters such as marriage, death and commerce (Muxudin, interview, 2014; Yaasmiin, interview, 2014). ‘The only ID you have for that person [you meet] is *qabiil*’, argued Baxsan, an accounting graduate. ‘It is the only thing we can rely on – telling clan is the only thing we have’ (Interview, 2014; translated by Inshaar).

Clan thus forms part of the information one expects to have about new (and old) acquaintances, either gained indirectly from other people or from ways of ‘reading’ the person or the situation. This reading is similar to what Allen Feldman describes as ‘telling’, in which the body of the other is read in order to determine ‘of which sociohistorical space the encountered body is a synecdoche’ (1991:157). In Somaliland society, the synecdoche is the clan, and the body is a kinsman. Signs upon the body are used to ‘read’ it and thus identify it, and these include accent and dress (see Bjork, 2007). Particularly in Hargeysa, where tastes are cosmopolitan and the fashions include Western-style dress, it is difficult for an outsider to read these small signs. However, ‘insiders’ claim special knowledge. Daacad, an educated man working for a prominent NGO, boasted that he could tell someone’s region (a euphemism for clan) by listening to clues in the voice, evaluating their manner and demeanour, and looking at what they ate because of purported cultural differences between east and west Somaliland (Interview, 2014). When pressed, he admitted that these were little more than stereotypes,¹⁰ but these and other signs (such as mobile phone number¹¹) are used as ways to guess clan when more revealing features are not apparent.

The use of birthplace is also a common cipher for clan since, despite the urbanisation, mobility and displacement of recent decades, the territorial geography of Somaliland remains largely clan-based. ‘People ask where you are born, where are you from, and then that gives you an answer’, explained Inshaar, who was running a computer repair company as well as helping me with translation (Interview, 2014a). This form of ‘knowing’ was repeatedly described to me as a ‘postcode’: in other words, a systemised way of locating a

¹⁰ For instance, the Habar Yonis are apparently called ‘lions’ because, explained researcher Daacad, their traditional lands in the Haud and Togdheer were once lion habitats, and also for their aggression in taking land and their dominance in terms of numbers. The Habar Jaallo are ‘foxes’ because they are regarded as cunning, and the ‘Iise Muuse are ‘monkeys’ because monkeys can be found in the Sheikh mountains, their traditional clan territory (there may also be character traits, which I was not privy to).

¹¹ Rooble claimed that you could sometimes tell where people were from because of their mobile phone number since different area codes are assigned to different parts of the country, for instance, 440-442 in Hargeysa, 443 for Burco, 444 for Berbera, 446 for Borama and 449 for Laascaanood (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). Sadaaq confirmed that he also used this sometimes to know where someone was from (interview, 2014). However, since there are different mobile operators in Somaliland (although these codes from Telesom are predominant), and it is possible to have more than one sim card, we might be skeptical about this as a form of identification.

unit within the entire demographic field.¹² Since there are no formal postcodes in Somaliland,¹³ offices, public buildings and homes are all found in the same way as a person: juxtaposition with a known unit (landmark/relative), and then asking for directions. It is in this way that the clan becomes part of the way of situating a person, just as profession or residence might have been used as a suffix in pre-modern Europe (Scott, Tehranian and Mathias, 2002). For instance, a fellow researcher once described to me how she had visited an office in Hargeysa to see a girl named Zahra (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2013). Asking at the front desk, ‘can I speak to Zahra?’, the receptionist’s flatly replied ‘which Zahra?’ Nimco replied that she did not know her other names, and so the receptionist asked ‘what’s her tribe?’ Also unknown, the receptionist declared: ‘How can you find someone if you don’t know their tribe?’ Similarly, Farhan, a civil servant at the electoral commission, said offhandedly to me, as we drove through the lunchtime rush: ‘I know everybody in Hargeysa. If I need to find anyone, I just find out his clan, and then I ask someone who asks someone’ (Interview, 2014).

According to Farhan, therefore, clan can work as an identifier, although only if a person’s clan can be discovered, clues of which may be in their name. Despite the tribalist connotations, clan is therefore sometimes asked about directly. As in the remarks by Muxudin and Baxsan above, my interlocutors argued that clan identity is the basis of identification. ‘You should use *qabiil* [clan] for identifying people or knowing who they are ... *Qabiil* will always be there’, argued Kulane, a construction worker in his early thirties (Interview, 2014; translated by Ashkir). Inshaar, the IT graduate, explained that: ‘*qabiil* is very important because everyone knows it. It is the identity. If you don’t know a person, he asks your name, your clan, sub-clan, then that person knows you’ (Interview, 2014b). These mundane ways of identifying people thus reinforce the idea that identity in Somaliland has an important relational quality, and that it is through relations and connections that a person can be known and verified.

‘Yaad Tahay?’

The question ‘yaad tahay?’ in Somali means ‘who are you’.¹⁴ An intelligible answer would therefore most likely be one’s three names, but my interlocutors suggested that this question is not simply asking who you are, but is a coded way of asking about clan, and thus the relationality of the questioner and the respondent. Ashkir, a teacher in his twenties recently

¹² The explanation was typically used by urbanites, often those who spoke excellent English and sometimes had spent time in the diaspora, suggesting that it may have been offered because of their own experience with postcodes, or the awareness that this would be a useful metaphor for me. Nevertheless, in the ways clan is spoken about, postcode, even if not so called, captures the idea. Lewis notes, for instance, that ‘a person’s address in Europe is his pedigree in Somaliland’ (1994:97).

¹³ The nomadic nature of the rural areas obviates a fixed system, whilst in the cities, the lack of a census or household survey, coupled with the absence of a postal system, means that homes and offices are located in alternative ways, such as proximity to landmarks (for example, ‘behind the school’, ‘near the UN compound’) or by district (‘Bad Cas’ [Red Sea], ‘June 26’). In 2015, the municipal council unveiled a city map of Hargeysa, but this still does not have zoning (Somaliland Sun, 2015b).

¹⁴ This is the translation that I was given. Lewis noted the versions ‘Tol maad tahay?’ (what is your agnatic group?) or ‘Qolomaad tahay?’ (‘what group are you?’) (1961:135).

returned to Hargeysa from growing up in the UK, had had to quickly come to terms with what this question was really about. He explained:

First you ask ‘yaad tahay?’ which means you are asking ‘what is your *qabiil* [clan] or *jilib* [sub-clan]?’ then you ask ‘yaad ka sii tahay?’ which means ‘who are you within that *jilib*, that group? Then when they give you an answer, you ask again ‘yaad ka sii tahay?’ until you get to the level you know. (Ashkir, interview, 2014c)

In the way Ashkir explains it, a question that is seemingly about personal identity (who are you?) is actually designed to ascertain membership within a collective (essentially, which group are you?). This method of inquiry is, according to Ashkir, colloquially called *tooyasho* (‘information-gathering’), a way of gathering information¹⁵ that seeks to establish someone’s relative location within the shared genealogical terrain, and which occurs at the relevant level required: it may be sub-sub-sub-clan in close quarters, or sub-clan or clan in other circumstances. Rooble, my research assistant in 2014, similarly told me that ‘who are you’ is not asking you what your name is, but what your clan is (Interview, 2014a). Inshaar, the IT graduate, similarly explained that a general question – about clan, or more likely region – elicits information with which to develop the appropriate situating strategy: ‘[if someone replies] Hargeysa or Burco – a place with mixed clan – then they ask which clan, then if it is the same clan [as them], they ask the sub-clan’ (Interview, 2014a).

This *tooyo* (‘information’) therefore maps someone within the broad genealogical terrain of Somaliland and, crucially, offers a shorthand for their relationships with others. Within this practice of *tooyasho*, clan identity becomes a ‘password’: it unlocks certain layers of identity to the casual acquaintance – to go further, to make the answer to ‘yaad ka sii tahay?’ meaningful, one has to be within the next concentric circle of identity – in other words, the same clan or sub-clan. Most people know the principal clans and sub-clans of Somaliland – such as the Arap, Dhulbahante, Habar Awal, Habar Jaallo, Habar Yoonis, Issa, Gadabuursi, Garhijis and Warsengeli (see Figure 1) – and therefore they can quickly get past the first question. It is in the next layers in which genealogical proximity comes to be meaningful: for instance, as Rooble put it, if you know someone is in the same layer, you might say: ‘don’t you know me? Our fathers are third cousins. Do you know me now?’ (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014) In Somaliland, therefore, layers of information are encoded within names, and how these are activated depends on the relationship between people. In this sense, there is no definitive answer to ‘yaad tahay’ since the relational nature of the question means that the answer depends upon who is asking the question.¹⁶

It is through this kind of patterned interaction, in which people are interpellated in different layers of identity and networks of connections, that genealogy and clan function as a mode of identification. There are different levels of intelligibility, with the clan name acting as postcode, since it is widely understood and known. The identity of the lower *jilbo*,

¹⁵ From the verb *tooyo* to mean ‘inquire or seek some information’.

¹⁶ Thanks for Giulia Liberatore for helping to phrase this point.

meanwhile, are not readily shared with people outside the clan, nor are they demanded in identification encounters, the reasons for which appear to be multi-layered. On a basic level, the information is not expected to have much utility, since once it is established where the genealogical commonality (if any) lies, additional information does not fit within each other's grids of intelligibility: 'it would be unknown and not structurally equivalent', wrote Lewis (1961:136). This means that unless you share a sub-clan or below, someone's claim to belong to a certain clan cannot be immediately verified, since most people do not know the lower *jilbo* of other clans or do not have a ready way of triangulating by relatives.¹⁷

What is the value of this as a form of identification then? As an outsider, it seems that if one's interlocutor does not have the relevant idiomatic knowledge, one could claim to be anyone (up to a point). My interviewees were unperturbed by my questions about how one could *really* know what someone's clan was or who someone was. The responses were all similar, and adamant: there is no reason for somebody to lie, people are proud of their clan, you always know (or rather, you can always find out) (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2013–14). Ugbaad, a political-party official, claimed that a common saying is 'Your face is your passport' (Interview, 2014). Having lived in the UK and in Hargeysa, she argued that identity fraud was not possible in Somaliland society. 'No one can come and say they are me. There is no other me' (ibid). She argued that this was because people are connected within webs of interpersonal relations, meaning that just as there is always someone who can 'speak for you', in other words, there is someone who will know that you are not who you claim to be. Constant processes of triangulation mean that this information can be discovered through a well-placed phone call or personal inquiry. 'If you don't know someone, you know someone who is related', was the constant refrain in answer to my questions (for instance by Dacaa, interview, 2014).

These claims about the ease and accessibility of situating people via the mental map of shared genealogy do, of course, need to be problematised because they over-simplify social relations and social identification. There is great fluidity in the personal invocation of identity: people use the level of clan at which they can access protection, whether that is the *mag*-paying group for one situation or the clan for another. This means that political identification is also enormously supple with people using networks derived from different configurations of clan based on paternal and maternal kin, as well as relationships more tenuously genealogically defined. As I have emphasised above, the practical transactions and activities of everyday life in the city throw people together in acquaintance and friendship, meaning genealogical relations or clan fellowship may not even figure as the primary frame of meaning. Certainly Somalilanders identify themselves and others in multiple and

¹⁷ To explain it another way, if I did not live in London, your explanation of which neighbourhood you live in, or indeed the location of your home, would be meaningless because I do not have the requisite knowledge or the relevant frame of meaning. Indeed, it would be strange to share such specific information with someone you did not know well, and possibly even dangerous. However, if we were both Londoners and indeed living in north London, your answer that you live in Camden town would have meaning for me and we could perhaps establish how far we live from one another and whether we know any intermediate people.

different political, economic, social and cultural ways. However, it also seems that lineage can act as an important identifier – one’s name, in the form of one’s first name followed by the string of paternal names, can be used a simple and standardised text of identity, and thus can be ‘read’ in order to verify identity. Farah made exactly this point when he claimed: ‘the genealogy is the real ID. You do not need ID. Someone will say, “I know your uncle”, and then he knows you’ (Interview, 2013).

Powerful Narratives: Genealogical Elision and Exclusion

This practice of triangulation via clan and lineage appears simple, mundane and universal. However, not everyone in Somaliland gains visibility via the ‘metic legibility’ of genealogy, or if they do, this ‘visibility’ is prejudiced and politicised. Identifying someone through *tooyasho* not only seeks to verify their identity according to genealogical structures, but also involves claims of *authentication*: are they a member of one’s own sub-clan, clan, or clan family (or perhaps even ‘nation’), and can this be authenticated against the standard frame of meaning (genealogy)? In other words, not only are they who *they* say they are, but can they be located in relation to *other* (authentic) people?

This undercurrent of authenticity comes from narratives and beliefs implicit in the use of genealogy as a structuring device for both official and vernacular identification. Lewis argued that unlike other segmentary lineage societies, where the genealogies are akin to parables (based in some loose way on history but actually mnemonic devices for present social relationships) the Somali system is a historical (or quasi-historical) record that conserves and stabilises bloodlines (1994:96). As we have seen above, we have to be aware of the hegemonic image of pastoralist society in Lewis’ work. That is the case here also. Genealogies appear to be emblematic texts that remember and commemorate actual, named ancestors. Even if we accept, as Lewis did, that Somali genealogy draws on real rather than fictive agnatic lineages, this does not mean it is free of mythology, as he himself recognised (*ibid*). Importantly, there is no source of verification of these storylines other than in the genealogies themselves.¹⁸ Rather, their credibility seems to be underwritten by three powerful narratives relating to time, authenticity and unity. These reinforce the power of genealogy to structure interpersonal life in Somaliland and create important gaps, elisions and invisibilities, which affect how genealogy and clanship are used as sources of identity verification.

The Genealogical Present

Like other genealogical systems, genealogy in Somaliland operates within a particular temporality that brings the past into the present (Shklar, 1971:144). This genealogical time is an imaginary in which multiple dimensions interact, and different conceptions of time

¹⁸ Thank you to Felix Berenskoetter for this point.

conjoin into a synthetic notion of uninterrupted time. Synchronic, ‘genealogical time’ smoothens breaks, shifts and divisions, creating a sense of continuity over time. This finds form in the linearity of the genealogical recitation that gives the blood chronicle the appearance of a single authoritative text. Genealogies also erase the transitions between different documentary techniques (Weigel, 2007).¹⁹ Instead, a genealogy seems to be a spoken text unchanged since historical times, in which ancestors and contemporaries alike recite the same words, and each can reach forward or back in history to the other. In this way, the special temporality of genealogy permits bloodlines to exist together in ‘a state of complete presence’ (Czerwinski, cited in Weigel, 2007). This ‘time map’ enables a particular kind of collective memory and social story telling (Zerubavel, 2003) that can reinforce particular narratives in the present, as I argue below.

The Image of Unity

These ideas about the temporal and genealogical proximity of one’s ancestors and relations translates into a powerful narrative that a person is linked to a great number of individuals both within their clan-family and with other clans with whom inter-marriage has taken place over generations. For instance, when discussing genealogy with Bilal, an electoral commissioner and businessman, he claimed: ‘I know everyone around me. I have some sort of linkage with them. I know where we meet in the tribal tree’ (Interview, 2013). When I asked Fawzia, a professional woman in her forties, whether she would call someone from the same sub-clan a relative, she responded: ‘in a way, all Isaaq are related, all Somalilanders are related’ (Interview, 2012). The implication of this shared ancestry is that certain clans are claimed to fit within a ‘total genealogy’, thus sharing an original history (Lewis, 1994).

The hegemonic idea of total relationality – what Luling described as the idea that ‘relationships must be there if only one can establish them’ (2006:474) – is, of course, not an inclusive one. This is particularly demonstrated by the marginalisation of the Gabooye, the ‘occupational’ groups that are often (misleadingly) called ‘minority clans’.²⁰ Their genealogies are set apart from those of the ‘majority’ clans, meaning that the tools of relativisation that Ashkir, Inshaar and other mentioned above are constrained – it is difficult to undertake *tooyasho* when the frames of reference are segregated.

Authentic Heritage

This leads to a third powerful narrative inherent in genealogy about authenticity. The temporal compression of genealogy enables contemporary representatives to call into discursive being not only distant ancestors but also the founding fathers of the clan-families.

¹⁹ For instance, that the shift from storytelling to colonial enumeration to the written Somali language.

²⁰ The ‘Gabooye’ is an umbrella category for a number of Somaliland clans that are marginalised and denigrated. Having traditionally undertaken ‘unclean’ tradecrafts such as haircutting and leather tanning, they have been historically stigmatised. Although there have been improvements, their options for economic and educational integration within wider society are limited, with constraints on who they marry, where they live and what work they can do (Hill, 2010).

Each genealogical tracing ends with a sheikh or saint whose name the clan bears: men reputedly of noble Arabian families descended from the Prophet, who married into northern Somali clans (Lewis, 1994:102–03). In this way, certain ‘noble’ clan-families (those called *bilis* [‘noble’] or majority) claim an essential link to Islam (via a blood pedigree) and to Arabia (rather than Africa). Counting back ancestors to the clan fountainhead thus connects certain people to the relatives of the Prophet who are named at the top of the genealogical chain. By asserting an authoritative linearity from founding fathers to the present day, and claiming a place for each (authentic) Somalilander, genealogy has an extraordinarily powerful ability to call into being ‘a people’, and to make the relations between them seem ‘natural’ (despite being a cultural product) and stable (despite containing many different chronologies) (Lewis, 1963:491; also see Bouquet, 1996:60). The effect of this is to give genealogical place a taken-for-granted quality, thereby making distinctions in status appear axiomatic, with implications for how the national community’s internal and external boundaries are drawn.

This again distinguishes the Gabooye. Gabooye do trace their ancestral lineages back through time, and thus situate contemporary kinsmen within a narrative that references legacy and longevity (Mowliid, interview, 2012). However, they are not able to make the same claim to prestigious beginnings as the Isaaq, Dir and Darood, and are instead said to have originated from magic and witchcraft or to have Jewish ancestors (ibid; Dacaa, interview, 2014; see also Lewis, 1961:263).²¹ If asking ‘who you are’ is also revealing of genealogical pedigree, then such practices of identification may serve to reinforce inequality and exclusion, since they reference deeper sociological narratives. Of course, in reality there is much more ambiguity in everyday relations, but the rhetorical power of authenticity creates the image of fixed social facts, which contributes to the social immobility experienced by the Gabooye. It is in this sense that finding out who someone not only identifies them but *authenticates* them, since ‘knowing clan’ brings with it encoded assumptions about status and social location.

There are also claims of superiority and inferiority within the ‘majority’ clans, which have implications for contemporary interactions. We can see this in the claim that some clans exhibit greater genealogical bifurcation and segmentation than others. These so-called *laan dheer* (‘long branch’), as opposed to *laan gaab* (‘short branch’) lineages are believed to contain a greater number of generations, and hence a greater fighting strength at the clan or sub-clan level (Lewis, 1994:100). A greater number of relatives also make for a broader network for patronage, favours and blood-money payments, and it is in this sense that numerical strength is a key indicator of political status. As with all genealogies, whilst

²¹ The so-called Yibir (derived from ‘Hebrew’) strongly reject this origin tale (Mowliid, interview, 2012). Ahmed Jama Hersi, a *suldaan* of the Yibir in Somalia, told a US reporter that ‘stories passed down from his forefathers have it that they came as Arabic-speaking teachers more than 1,000 years ago’ – a similar descent story to the other Somali clans (Fisher, 2000). Nevertheless, the stigmatisation continues, with Ahmed saying ‘Even our young people, they are ashamed when you ask them what tribe they belong to. They will not say Yibir’ (ibid).

personal lineages might name the fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers and so on of a person, the branches of relatives that come off these are subject to ‘the click of secateurs, the sawing, hacking and crashing of fallen branches, the killings off’ of history (Bouquet, 1996:60). In other words, there is often a process of editing in genealogical accounts – what Lewis calls ‘genealogical elision’ (1994:100) – which may explain why some lineages appear longer or shorter. This is not a popular interpretation; rather, those who come from *laan dheer* take great pride in the number of generations in their lineages. Over breakfast in the garden of one of Hargeysa’s popular hotels, Roda, a young woman working in the Burco local government, unselfconsciously explained it to me in this way:

Laan dheer is when you have more grandfathers back to the founding father. Twenty or twenty-one is the most, I have eighteen or nineteen; fourteen or fifteen means fewer generations and a smaller size. Some people have more history than others. (Interview, 2012)

Roda’s claim here – that one can have ‘more’ or ‘less’ history – reveals the current of authenticity that runs through the genealogical idiom in Somaliland: contemporary status is informed, in part, by one’s ancestral history. A Somaliland person is connected to history – an authentic history – by his or her lineage: the number of grandfathers gives real political meaning in the present, by endorsing the authenticity and identity of the contemporary lineage members. Just as with the idea of genealogical unity, the notion of authentic histories is a powerful tool of politics in the present day by creating grounds for inequality and by legitimating barriers to inclusion for the Gabooye in particular.

‘Made-Up Names’

The Gabooye are not the only circumscribed group in Somaliland. *Garacyo* (illegitimate children, sg. *garac*)²² also fall out of these majoritarian terms of reference, and thus find it difficult to situate themselves genealogically, and thus be *authenticated* as Somalilanders.

The patrilineal naming system that I described above means women do not give their own names to their offspring, but only those from the paternal line. Rooble, my research assistant with young children, was very clear about this when we discussed it: ‘Sometimes people adopt these children, but they do not take the man’s name or his fathers: you cannot give him your name’ (Interview, 2014b). Children without a known or named father (born of rape or out of wedlock) thus carry a lifelong burden of not having their ‘true’ (i.e. paternal) lineage recorded in their name – they have no *abtirsiino*. *Garacyo* are not situated via the ‘metic legibility’ that comes from the dominant Somaliland genealogical idiom.

²² Although it is difficult to find firm statistics, an estimated 10 percent of Somaliland’s children are orphaned or vulnerable (ANPPCAN-SOM, nd). The majority are taken in by extended family members or neighbours, but 350–400 orphans live at the Hargeisa Orphanage Centre, the only national institution for destitute children dating from 1954 (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014; Hargeisa Orphanage Centre, nd; Rajo Foundation, nd). Whilst young girls who live there may be adopted, boys and young men face spending their whole childhood at the state orphanage, often well into their early twenties because of the discrimination and stigma attached to the status of *garacyo* (Hargeisa Orphanage Centre, nd; Wargane, 2015).

The status of illegitimate children is therefore ambiguous at best. Whilst Islamic teaching regards any child born out of wedlock as innocent – for instance, verse 38 of the Surah al-Najm ‘No soul shall bear the burden of another’ (Al-Islam.org, nd) – discussions about the appropriate arrangements for ‘*halaal*’ (permissible) babies (for instance, SomaliNet, 2010) show that there are a range of attitudes about illegitimacy. The increasing incidence of rape (and its reporting) in Somaliland also complicates perceptions of *garacyo*.²³ The stigmatisation of rape victims means that victims have traditionally been married to rape perpetrators so that any resulting child is born within the boundaries of marriage; otherwise, young women and their children face marginal status (Samiira, interview, 2012; Somaliland Sun, 2013a). Lawyer and human rights expert Fuaad told me frankly: ‘orphans do not have a role in society – that’s how it is’.

If the father is not known, it is difficult to be legitimised. You may get citizenship but [you] may not get a social position because of the barrier of legitimacy ... [*garacyo* are] living in an isolated island with no political rights. (Interview, 2012)

The court gives children at orphanages new identities, including paperwork that enables them to attend school and apply for government documents (Halgan, interview, 2014). This is not, however, enough to give them currency within the clan system: they remain, in Fuaad’s words, ‘third-class citizens ... behind minorities’ (Interview, 2012). So whilst *garacyo* can claim legal status in Somaliland, the reality is that without a clan, there is no source of *mag* (blood money) and no fungible identity. ‘Society insults them’, Halgan, a senior staff member at Hargeysa orphanage told me, ‘they say, “you’re not anyone, you have no identity”’ (Interview, 2014). As adults, sometimes orphans do well, completing their education, finding work and getting married, but the prospects for most without clan backing are poor: he must be ‘enough for himself’, Halgan said (ibid).

In order to have a credible identity therefore, *garacyo* sometimes conduct research into their background and find their actual clan, or are adopted by the clan of a friend, but ‘few are able to do this’, said Halgan (ibid). Others claim to be from a different region (so that the triangulation opportunities are more limited), or even nominate a clan as their own (Fieldnotes, 2014). Reciprocation, in which clans claim a *garac*, is rare however, according to Halgan (Interview, 2014). Even those who take these routes to assert a legible identity find it difficult to overcome the stigma. In a sense, therefore, *garacyo* are nameless. As Rooble said bluntly: ‘they have no name. These are made-up names and the names refer to no one. There is no lineage’ (Rooble, interview, 2014b). These attitudes makes identification within a system that draws on lineage, connections and networks very difficult, and show how vernacular practices are not necessarily inclusive or equal.²⁴

²³ Gang rapes and the rape of children have been reported in areas with high numbers of vulnerable people, in particular Hargeysa’s IDP camps and minority neighbourhoods (Somali Current, 2013; Fieldnotes, 2012).

²⁴ The prospect of credible documentation under the new civil registration scheme that I discuss in Chapter 6 may shift these attitudes in time, but for the time being a *garac*’s exclusion from the genealogical idiom renders him invisible via the vernacular frames of verification that are at work in Somaliland.

‘The Clan at My Back’

These narratives of inclusion and authenticity therefore shape notions of belonging and situatedness in Somaliland and are supported by the significance of clan membership to personal and social status. Nabiil, an MP, explained the utility of the *abtirsiino* one early evening at the Maan-Soor Hotel, where we had met for tea as the dusk settled, the swallows emerged and the call to prayer began to softly drift over the evening air.

I am Nabiil, my father is Muuse, Hussein, Adam, Mustafe, Abokor, Ahmed, Mukhtaar, Shermarke, Hassan, Abdullah, Mohamed, Mohamed, Ali, Carab, Isaaq.^[25] So it is that ladder. And it depends on the problem I am trying to solve. So I will call the help of certain parts of the ladder, you don't need the rest. But if the problem [affects] others, you go up the ladder: you go to increase your security, your assistance. It's going like this [gesturing]: it's dividing up, then going down, then coming together. (Interview, 2012)

Its value, he argued, was that it offered a way to comprehend the layers of protection that come from the different levels of clan identity. The array of connections afforded by family and clan act as established conduits for favours and financial assistance, motivated and obligated by blood, reputation and charity. Even though some people are able to draw upon a variety of productive relations because their personal wealth, social position or profession affords them such breadth, the dominant frame in which connections are made and duties discharged is that of clan. It is these interactions that give flesh to the framework of genealogy since, as Jama argues, *tolnimo* (group feeling) does not come from genealogy alone (2007).

The ladders that Nabiil describes are part of the networks of solidarity that animate everyday life, situating people within complex interpersonal webs. Many quotidian encounters and exchanges are thus structured by the logic of clanship: ‘you are a member of a community, you are a member of a clan: that sets you up, your parameters. How you deal with others is always determined by your clan’ (Nabiil, interview, 2012). In important ways, the relationship between state and citizen is mediated via the clan, both in terms of social services, which are delivered via a ‘social contract’, and in terms of legibility.²⁶ In the absence of a capable state, for many Somalilanders the clan is the source of justice, welfare and security: it is ‘insurance’ in the face of uncertainty and anarchy, since the state cannot provide such assurances. As Aniso, a female lawyer working in a downtown legal clinic, put it, ‘your clan follows for you’ (Interview, 2012).

Through conventions of reciprocity and protection, clan structures provide ways of meeting the needs of everyday life, drawing on the survival politics of traditional pastoralist life: at times of difficulty, your brother and cousin look after you; at times of plenty, you share in return (Ashkir, interview, 2014a). Central to this is, of course, the enduring practice of *mag*, in which all eligible males (and now often women) contribute to compensatory funds for the

²⁵ The names of the first ten grandfathers have been changed to protect Nabiil's identity.

²⁶ On the idea of this relationship as a ‘social contract’, see Leonard and Samantar, 2010.

crimes of their kinsmen.²⁷ This institution is regulated by *xeer*, the customary contracts and agreements between clan groupings that set out how crimes committed by and against them will be resolved, and what levels of *mag* apply.²⁸ Whilst women have a complicated status in clan relations (as discussed above), here interstitiality is an advantage since women gain security and legal recourse along two routes, as they fall under the formal protection of their husband's clan, but their father's clan claims *mag* should they be harmed.

In my interviews, the scenario of accidental or intentional murder was the default way of explaining the protection provided by clan. For instance, discussing this one day together, my research assistant Rooble quipped, 'Why do I need [sic] for someone else's crime?' His answer: 'I know that if something happens to me then that murderer will pay for me' (Interview, 2014c). That is not to say that there is not a criminal investigation bureau, local police stations and courts in Hargeysa, and that some crimes are not punished through the criminal justice system,²⁹ but these institutions are considered weak, unaccountable and unpredictable. They do not have the legitimacy and proximity of the decentralised and often intimate customary and Sharia arrangements (Hagmann and Hoehne, 2009; see also Logan, 2013 and Menkhaus, 2006).³⁰ In comparison, the clan is always there, argued Nasteho, the chief representative of a Somaliland NGO:

[I]f a soldier, a policeman badly beats somebody else, an ordinary person, or maybe people like me, do I know where to go? And if I know, can I get a fair trial on that? Can I sue the police commissioner? Can I sue the policeman himself? Can I get some sort of compensation on that, whatever it is? No, no. Those rights are not [there] – the lives of people are not protected in other words. I can be easily beaten in town and then my clan will come in and there will be some traditional agreement, clan agreement. Not a civic one! (Interview, 2012)

In addition to the expense and weakness of the secular legal system,³¹ the dominance of customary conflict resolution is also explained by the idea of justice as a collective good that

²⁷ A *mag*-paying group contains between 300 and 2,000 families, with groups bifurcating into smaller groups as the population grows in order to keep ties durable (Dacaad, interview, 2014). Schlee (2013:261) notes that small groups may enter into contractual relations with distantly related groups to share the burdens of protection and compensation, since small groups are at a disadvantage against large groups who individually pay proportionately less. Women do not traditionally pay *mag*, although the post-conflict labour market has meant that sometimes women are the only breadwinners and hence must make a contribution (Hammond, 2010:140).

²⁸ This is standardly 100 camels for the murder of a man, 50 for a woman, and various denominations of these sums for lesser injury, and draws on Sharia and also negotiation and precedent. The many contracts and oral agreements that make up *xeer* exist at the many levels of the clan system, and can change over time. As Bradbury notes (2008:17), the nature and application of *xeer* is debatable, and includes permutations and innovations, which cannot be covered here. Schlee (2013) has a useful overview of the negotiations and variations of *mag*, noting that relative strength and genealogical proximity can all affect the actual amounts due.

²⁹ For instance, six men tried for murder were controversially executed in April 2015 in the first fulfilment of the death sentence in decades (Somaliland Sun, 2015a).

³⁰ The Somaliland constitution explicitly draws on the Sharia (Republic of Somaliland, 2001). The tripartite legal system of Sharia, British common law (including the Indian penal code) and customary law is not formally defined, but different matters are conventionally dealt with by different corpora, notably family matters (including marriage and inheritance) under Sharia, and criminal proceedings under common law (see Battera and Campo, 2001). Sometimes cases can begin in the secular court and then be settled by recourse to customary mediation or vice versa (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2012). See also Schlee, 2013 and Tunganaza, 2008.

³¹ According to Aniso, a lawyer undertaking pro-bono work, in addition to hiring a lawyer, taxes must be paid depending on the value of the case, for instance, an initial cost of \$7 for a family law case, together with \$7 for the judgement, and \$3 to deliver legal paperwork to the other party (Aniso, interview, 2012). This seems to be at the low end of estimates, likely because Aniso was working for a legal clinic. Balthasar's estimates, for instance, are much higher: 'One informant estimated that a case of USD 5,000 in value costs about USD 1,000 to settle – some USD 200-400 for the court, some USD 300 for the lawyer, expenses for transport and witnesses, etc' (2012:228, note 598).

is provided by communal institutions rather than state ones. ‘Most people believe security is in our hands’, said Tawfiq, a university graduate and the son of a prominent politician (Interview, 2012). Shire, a senior lawyer, argued that the preference for customary mediation is not arcane or exotic, but one of community balance: ‘Justice means where both parties are united and happy, where there is no revenge, no deaths, where there is peace and harmony’ (Interview, 2012; translated by Roda). This idea of justice commends the importance of situatedness within clan networks – of knowing one’s relatives, and supporting them as they support you. ‘In the West, you don’t even know your fourth father because you don’t rely on them. You believe you can go to the police. Here you cannot do that’, said Rooble, my research assistant (Interview, 2014a). Even when people do pursue legal cases through the secular courts or try to hold the government accountable for its actions, the clan is still appears to be regarded as the primary channel (Nabiil, interview, 2012). Without fully functioning state institutions, clan law and the governance of caaqils provides accountability and a mechanism for an even-handed, commonly accepted outcome, which can be enforced across the country, even where the Somaliland state does not reach. Inshaar, an IT graduate also helping me with my interviews, told me over tea one day:

Until we will get the society that will allow the rules are in place and the government that is ready to cover everything and the community aware that they need to go through that kind of system, until we find that community, caaqil is very important. Because without caaqil, no two will talk together. Every day in the Somali community, there is an accident, there is a war between two persons, maybe there is a knife and there is damage. So the caaqils go to the family and that family and says calm down. The government can’t because there is a lack of resource, lack of police, so caaqil is very important in that kind of situation. [...]

We do not have a registry; we do not have a record. If I go to Laascaanood and kill someone there is no record, there is no security camera. But there is someone who knows me. He says that guy who killed someone is from that clan. There is no security camera, there is no ID card, but that clan will automatically contact my clan and say that guy is from your clan and he came to Laascaanood and killed someone. (Interview, 2014b)

Inshaar expressed the idea that clan identity enables situatedness and triangulation because it is a form of ID already. It is via genealogy not state administration that people are made legible, and hence accountable to the law. Clan is also a significant conduit for political access and power, as demonstrated particularly at election times, when candidates rely heavily on the support of their kinsmen for funding and, importantly, endorsement. Although greater regulation of political parties has been introduced, it remains extremely difficult to obtain office without the endorsement of one’s clan, which is of more practical and symbolic significance than the political party (see Walls, 2014). Once in politics, the need for clan support does not go away. ‘Even the government is saying, “Where is your clan?”’ claimed Rooble, my research assistant (Interview, 2014a). The government utilises the leverage civil servants, MPs and government members have with their clans in order to fill the gaps in their own capacity, he argued. When someone can no longer act as a conduit for their clan, their political effectiveness is called into question. ‘Even when the president is appointing ministers, he appoints them on how [much] influence they have within the clan’,

Nabiil, a senior parliamentarian, told me. ‘That minister, let him be a very brilliant administrator or whatever it is, or very able apparatchik, if he doesn’t have influence with the clan, he is not of use to him’ (Interview, 2012). As a report by local research institute the Academy for Peace and Development notes: ‘Clan ties are routinely mobilized in support of locally driven projects, including fund-raising and political lobbying. Indeed, many Somalilanders are sceptical of initiatives that fail to activate kinship dynamics’ (SCPD, 1999:77).

The significance of one’s situatedness in the clan thus becomes clear. Even if one never has cause to activate a substantial network of kin and acquaintance, the promise of support remains. ‘They know the clan will speak for them’, said Nasteho, the civil society leader and activist (Interview, 2012). ‘The clan will automatically protect the integrity of that person’ (ibid). It is no surprise, therefore, that identification carries with it an assessment of guarantee – that when people’s identity is verified, it is with reference to clan, which gives a guarantee of their genealogical location, and thus indicates whether duty or sanction structures the relationship. Clan identification is significant because as one moves within the concentric circles of clan identity, trust, reciprocity and safeguarding increase correspondingly. This is why I argue in the thesis that identifying someone in terms of their clan is a form of authentication, as well as identification. It carries with it an assessment of the quality of relatedness between actors, which may lead to the activation of certain kinds of duties and guarantees.

Networks of Reciprocity

Such duties are the lifeblood of social networks, and giving money in particular is one of the obligations of clan situatedness, as evidenced by the enormous volume of daily transactions in the *xawaalad* (money transfer) industry (Adeso, 2012; Hammond, 2010; Lindley, 2007). There is a strong redistributive ethic amongst Somalis deriving from the duty of *zakaat* (charity), one of the five pillars of Islam, as well as *mag*, based on a key principle of survival in pastoralist society: at times of difficulty, your brother and cousin look after you; at times of plenty, you share in return (Ashkir, interview, 2014a).³² There are also well-established norms of assistance found in the institution of *qaadhaan*, the clan-based equivalent of collective fundraising and support. At clan meetings, members will donate for particular projects – for instance, political campaigns or university scholarships – which benefit their members and thus have a corporate value. *Qaadhaan* can also be used to support young couples in their marriage, for instance by giving six months’ rent money, and within families if there is a death or someone loses their job (Ifrax, interview, 2014). Such donations are

³² *Mag*-paying groups are typically constituted by relatives with shared patrilineal descent, although Schlee (2013:261) notes that small groups may enter into contractual relations with distantly related groups to share the burdens of protection and compensation, since small groups are at a disadvantage against large groups who individually pay proportionately less. Women do not traditionally pay *mag*, although the post-conflict labour market has meant that sometimes women are the only breadwinners and hence must make a contribution (Hammond, 2010:140).

arranged via collective accountability mechanisms – everyone gives – based upon the principle of reciprocity in which one pays for others because one day they will pay for you.³³

These payments are also made less formally on a case-by-case basis. ‘There are actually many forms of assistance going on amongst us guys’, Saalim, a well-known and respected director of a local NGO, told me. ‘Sometimes for example if you lose your property or your livestock, they [the clan] will help you. If you get married and you are broke, they will help you. If somebody dies from your family, and you cannot bury, they will help you’ (Interview, 2013). The MP Nabiil gave a similar list of assistance, although this time from the perspective of the beneficiary: ‘Nowadays, when I am getting married, the clan will pitch in. At birth, when a new baby [arrives], the clan will come and say, “what can I do for you?” They will even line up to give blood for my wife if she is ill. You call them in and they come voluntarily. I am going to a surgery to have my appendix removed, and three or four people will come and say, “Ok, do you need blood?”’ (Interview, 2012)

This logic of reciprocity operates banally and broadly in many African societies, both as a functional and normative necessity, filling the administrative gaps of weak regulatory systems, and forming the basis of solidarity (Olivier de Sardan, 1999:41; see also Chabal, 2009). Dacaaad, a thoughtful man in his late fifties or early sixties who had worked for a long time in Hargeysa’s civil society, told me bluntly: ‘You can’t survive without networks. The more networks you have, the better you are’ (Interview, 2014). Granovetter describes reciprocity as one of the four characteristics of strong interpersonal ties (1973:1361). Indeed, reciprocity is the lubricant of the networks that I describe in this chapter, exacting obligations and offering recourse. In Olivier de Sardan’s words:

One cannot refuse a service, a favour, a bit of string-pulling or compliance to a relative, neighbour, party comrade or friend. Nor ought one to refuse the same to someone who is ‘sent’ by any of the above. The circle of individuals to whom one feels obliged to render services is thus astonishingly wide. One must add the converse, that there is also a great number of persons to call upon. (1999:40)

This reservoir of social capital is built up over time and is regulated by the norms of Somaliland kinship. Relations as reckoned by *tol* are the obvious recipients of service, favour and money, but often these are long or tenuous chains of relation. For instance, I asked Saalim, the NGO director I introduced above, to explain who it is who helps him, and who he himself helps:

It is so difficult to describe. It may sometimes be one sub-sub-clan. Sometimes it may have something to do with the status of the group asking you. Sometimes you never know. In some situations there may be rules or traditions of helping, for example, my name is Saalim Yusuf Khalif Ismaacil, and there may be fifty families also from Ismaacil. So, for instance, two days ago I gave \$300 to someone whose son

³³ This sort of coordinated action made possible via norms of reciprocity and networks, and without legal sanctions, might be described as a form of interpersonal or social capital. However, my goal here is not to examine the mechanisms by which communal goals (such as the community road-building projects in Hargeysa and Burco) are facilitated, which might draw on social-capital theories, but rather to consider the interpellating outcomes of such practices, which such accounts do not fully illuminate.

had eloped. [His father] is Faisal Khadar Khalif Osman, so Khalif is the grandfather. We are cousins, maybe a bit distant cousins. ... So this guy didn't have any money and so this is why I gave him money, because we belong to the same family. People may think of us badly, that this family is not good. It's just like you because you have some cousins. It's not obligatory but for the reputation of the family. So things like that happen every day. So you are bound to help them. ... The closer the person is to you, the greater the pressure he or she may put to you to help them. (Interview, 2013)

Saalim here reveals two levels of assistance at which he is obliged to help. The first is that of the sub-sub-clan or the first *jilib*, which may number a few hundred people, to whom he gives financial assistance in emergencies, particularly in those instances where there might be an impact on clan reputation or cohesion. Saalim notably uses the first few rungs of his *abtirsiino* to explain the circumference of the group that this obligation extends to. This is what might be termed one's 'extended' network (Granovetter, 1973:1370). The second is at a more personal level: one's 'effective' network (*ibid*). Saalim told me that he spends up to a \$1000 a month helping people with medical prescriptions, education fees and other costs. These payments are what the English teacher Ashkir called *biil*: the small, regular amounts of money that help relatives out with school bills and petrol. 'The going rule is \$100 a month', he claimed (Interview, 2014a). Research on financial flows in Somaliland by Studio D frames these payments in terms of the 'frictionless financial interdependence' within families and sub-clans: unlike the discrete family units of typical 'Western' families, there are strong financial ties and few barriers to the movement of money between different branches of the same family (2015:23–25). 'Money moves from those who have it to those who need it without guilt or expectation' (*ibid*:25).

Saalim's rationale for assistance was grounded in the reputation of the family: that they did not get a bad name as those who could not meet social obligations, but also to help those directly related to him. 'There is a "family chain of assistance"', he said. 'You don't think just for you or your children, also you think your father, children of your brother, children of your sister, children of your cousins' (Interview, 2013). In the highly networked community of Hargeysa, in which people are embedded and through which identity is verified, connections valorised and promises made, personal reputation is important.³⁴ 'Everyone has got a reputation', said Dacaaad, the civil society leader; 'it is like credit value in the West' (Interview, 2014). If you do not help, Saalim told me: 'Some people may say, oh you are a bad man, you met so-and-so here, you could have helped him, but you didn't help. They will not find you, they will not punish you, but it gives a signal that you are not a nice man' (*ibid*). Similarly, people must also give, and not just take. Writing of her observations in Mogadishu, Simons notes how people 'had to weigh the value of bothering someone too much against the value of what it was they were bothering that person for' (1995:118). Whilst formal clan sanctions may be rare except for egregious behaviour, there is nonetheless a normative expectation that genealogical connections are meaningful and that they will be used judiciously.

³⁴ The utility of social reputation as the basis for identification is discussed in Chapter 2.

As a prominent member of civil society, Saalim has a regular income, and so many people are dependent upon him. The obligation does not fall on him only because of his personal wealth, but also because of his social standing. In her article about the burden of remittances on senders in Maine in the United States, Hammond (2010) includes the story of Mohamed, whose uncle is a senior sub-clan leader, requiring him to raise funds for those in need within the sub-clan – regardless of their geographic location. The uncle's status refracts obligations onto the other males in his immediate family. Hammond writes: 'Mohamed laments the fact that his uncle is so senior in the clan, for it means that he also is looked upon to provide for clansmen and women whom he might not be obliged to help if his family did not have such a high social standing' (2010:139). Those at the apex of the clan socially and financially have a burden of responsibility towards relatives and kinsmen that is discharged in a highly personalised and informal way. As Saalim explained, 'There is always allegiance. There is always some sort of attachment. For example, if somebody comes to me saying that I am from your tribe and that maybe I have this trouble or something like that, you may come to help him. It's very important. I don't know why. Maybe the way we grew up' (Interview, 2013).

This does not, of course, mean that these obligations are either always welcome or easy. One afternoon as we were sitting in his office in Jigjiga-Yar, Hargeysa's northwestern neighbourhood, in September 2014, I asked Ashkir why his phone was ringing so much. 'It's the first of the month', he replied simply. With salaries usually paid at the month's start, Ashkir's relatives – often distantly connected or unfamiliar – were calling to avail themselves of the obligation to share wealth. 'I'm not picking up', Ashkir said (Interview, 2014b). Ashkir did eventually pick up, however, because these connections need to be kept alive and lubricated; and there are costs of non-compliance in terms of reputation and the 'give-and-take' that Saalim and Inshaar describe.

The array of connections afforded by family and clan therefore act as established conduits for favours and financial assistance, motivated and obligated by blood, reputation and charity. Even though some people are able to draw upon a variety of productive relations because their personal wealth, social position or profession affords them such breadth, the dominant frame in which connections are made and duties discharged is that of clan. As Nabiil put it, 'It is accepted and it is expected. You relate to your clan in a way, you relate to others in a way' (Interview, 2012).

Trust and Credibility

Implicit in these relationships of protection and reciprocity are basic assumptions about the trustworthiness of fellow clan members, and the maintenance of one's credibility within these circles of trust. By capturing the vagaries of family life, the genealogy is in some way a record of trust decisions. 'Each level is a trust level' agreed Dacaaad, a member of Hargeysa's

civil society (Interview, 2014). It shows the alliances of marriage and the breaks of divorce, the coming together and division of families. At the most fundamental level of *mag*-paying solidarity, Dacaaad told me that one trusts one's relatives with 'life, knowledge and reputation: if they betray you, they betray themselves' (ibid). These assumed moral and legal obligations derived from blood and contract form an integral part of socio-political organisation in Somaliland, by giving political meaning and value to certain blood relationships, and excluding others. These contracts come into play at moments of union (for instance, marriage) and discord (crime, conflict and dispute), but they do not seem to govern day-to-day relations in quotidian life in the city.

The generalised norm of reciprocity found within clans that I discuss in this chapter assumes that the costs of cooperation are set and managed by these institutions. The norms of clan cooperation create the conditions for the 'encapsulated interests' that Hardin (2006:17) argues are integral to trust, since there are mutual interests in the maintenance of relations between the trusting parties. The assumed mutual adherence to clan norms of cooperation means that the initial 'sizing up' (ibid:37) of people as trustworthy can be quicker or more informed. In this way, the norms and networks of reciprocity within clans provide 'scripts of trustworthiness'. These 'scripts' are pre-written and assume that within clans there is 'familiarity and understanding', as Warfa, a livestock trader working in Hargeysa, put it (Interview, 2014; translated by Ashkir), which can create the grounds of trust. Or as Muxudin, a young journalist, explained: sharing an identity with one's clan means that you can share 'secrets and special information' with them (Interview, 2014).

This is not to claim that clan relationships are automatically trustworthy or valuable. As my research assistant Inshaar put it: 'Knowing someone's clan does not give you good information about that person. It doesn't give you how exactly that person is' (Interview, 2014b). In this, Inshaar echoes Hardin's observation that even with the presence of social factors to encourage trusting someone, the decision to trust depends upon personal assessments (2006:36). As I have already noted, clanship, derived from genealogy, is characterised by fluidity, which Luling captures clearly with the observation that: 'Who I am may be inescapably laid down, but to whom I turn for support, whom I will support in my turn, with whom I ally myself, is by no means so' (2006:474). My point here is not, therefore, that clan identities create rigid frameworks of trust and confidence, constraining transactions between people. Clan identity does seem, nevertheless, to support particular kinds of interactions amongst those who share genealogical fellowship. If we accept the argument that on-going uncertainty and weak state provision in Somaliland continues to necessitate rich webs of interrelationships based within the genealogical idiom, then certain assumptions about the trustworthiness of those bound by blood and contract do seem to follow. The connection to my broader argument about verification is that the identification of people within this frame of metic legibility contains an implicit 'sizing up' that is connected to deep narratives of authenticity.

Vouching

The scripts of trustworthiness and guarantees of protection that I have described above are part of what Scott described as the second map of activity beneath formal grids of intelligibility, which consist of ‘tracings, as in a time-lapse photograph, of all the *unplanned* movements ... far more complex than the first, [it] reveals very different patterns of circulation’ (1998:347). In Somaliland, these ‘unplanned movements’ include local and informal practices of vouching, by which people guarantee, and take on guarantees for, the identity of acquaintances, friends, kinsmen and even, in some cases, strangers. Even though these acts do not require shared clan or kin, I argue that the logic of genealogy *qua* a chain of verifiable identity is still nevertheless at work as a background condition to these exchanges.

As I reflected in Chapter 1, most of my research in Somaliland was possible because friends, colleagues, officials and interviewees vouched for me, giving their name as guarantee for mine so that I could meet new people and enter new sites. Sometimes, chains of vouching enabled me to do my work: someone who I had only just met introduced me to a third party, on the basis of a recommendation or request from a first person. For a long time Somaliland citizens have not had effective forms of ID, and so practices of showing documentation as evidence of identity are either not in place or relatively unimportant. Instead, people are often situated in terms of clan (their postcode) and genealogy (their relatives), and their identity is authenticated by reference to whom you know and, ultimately, whom you are related to. Samatar, a university graduate living in Hargeysa, described to me how when he applied for a job, he was told to ‘bring someone you trust’ to vouch for him: this ‘sponsor’ would be responsible for his conduct at work – his own credentials were insufficient (Interview, 2014). Vouching is therefore a critical practice that involves identification based in trust and guarantee, and which utilises the webs of interrelationships in which people are embedded.

In everyday contemporary life, the propinquity of the urban environment helps to facilitate the people-to-people connection that makes vouching possible. Hargeysa is a relatively small city, with a population of around 500,000 to 1 million depending on seasonal fluctuations (most notably when the diaspora descends in the summer months) (MoNPD, 2013; UNFPA, 2014). Within professions, educational institutions,³⁵ mosques, neighbourhoods, and even remittance offices, it is possible to become known to one’s proximate peers, and men in particular benefit from this access since they typically conduct a more public life than women who undertake daily tasks, including prayer, at home. It is this constellation of linkages that Bourdieu called ‘practical kinship’, ‘whose boundaries and definitions are as many and as varied as its users and the occasions on which it is used’, as

³⁵ Phillips writes about how the graduates of the secondary schools at Sheikh and Amoud constitute a network of influential individuals who ‘continue to assist each other to navigate the (considerable) spaces between Somaliland’s formal institutions’ (2013:74).

opposed to ‘official kinship’ which is ‘single and immutable, defined once and for all by the norms of genealogical protocol’ (1977:34).

The possibility of face-to-face interaction, combined with the widespread use of genealogical identification, means that one’s identity can be verified by other people. ‘People vouch for each other from friendship, experience or tribe’, Tawfiq, a university graduate, told me (Interview, 2012). Or as Fawzia claimed: ‘I can go to Dahabshiil and ten people I don’t know will vouch for me because they will say “Fawzia, Ahmed, Mohamed, Cumar etc”’ (Interview, 2013).³⁶ In this sense clan identities are constructed ‘in the midst of everyday interaction’ (Bjork, 2007:112). Behind all these cases of vouching lies a certain kind of ‘knowability’. Fawzia is an influential civil servant from a prominent family: she could be known to strangers, who would then affirm her identity. However, this does not seem to be atypical. My interlocutors often recounted similar stories of identities being public knowledge. Dirie, a journalist in Hargeysa, told me matter-of-factly that ‘here [in Somaliland] a minister can sit with a waiter and talk together’, before relating me the story of being in a hotel in Hargeysa and seeing the waiter berating a minister on the issue of the talks with Somalia (Interview, 2012). Tawfiq also had a similar story: ‘I was in the Oriental [hotel], and the receptionist was reading the paper and it said that the head of the intelligence agency had gone [defected] to Somalia. The guy was sitting right there, so he went to him and showed him the newspaper. The intelligence chief said, “It’s not true. I’m right here!”’ (Interview, 2013)

The reality of course is that not everyone can go up directly to important individuals. Although distinctions between backgrounds and fortunes may be concealed within sub-clans and sub-sub-clans, between the major clans and Somaliland’s ‘minorities’, there are clear divisions based on class and occupation, meaning interactions are less frequent and more conscious. It is also the case that, although proximity in social spaces enables kinsmen to mingle, unsolicited encounters are rare: although someone might be ‘known’ genealogically, they are in fact ‘unknown’ in personal terms. Hence even those from prominent families can usually only take advantage of blood relationships via intermediate connections that ‘vouch’ for their identity and trustworthiness.

Conduits and Bridges

Earlier, I noted that the senior MP Nabiil had used the metaphor of a ‘ladder’ to describe how he utilised the different genealogical nodes from his *abtirsiino*. Warfa, the livestock trader living in northern Hargeysa, offered a similar image of *jaraanjaro* (stairs) when discussing how he used his networks: ‘I would use ‘stairs’: someone who knows someone who knows someone’ (Interview, 2014; translated by Ashkir). For instance, when I asked him how he would contact his clan elder, he responded: ‘I would begin with my family, and

³⁶ The names of Fawzia’s lineage, as her own, have been anonymised.

after three flights of stairs would be the caaqil'. These two images reveal the value of the practice of genealogical identification: through the 'steps' of intervening relatives, one can 'work' networks to access those unknown or unfamiliar.

The ability to navigate the levels of clan identity, and recognise the appropriate interface for interaction, comes with experience and also the reading of subtle clues, such as the neighbourhood one lives in or the company one keeps. It also comes from asking others for insider information and utilising intermediate connections in order to 'bridge' genealogical gaps. At the quotidian or micro level of interaction, the use and management of such connections is the way business is done. This 'economy of connections' (Simons, 1995) is based on access and reference, both of which use vouching based on finding points of interconnection. This seems to be a widespread practice. Lindley, for instance, has shown that certain individuals in diaspora communities, who she calls 'conduit people', help to identify needs, raise funds and facilitate remittance payments (2007:13). These are not anonymous brokers, but key family members in the 'geometries' of remittance relationships who maintain contacts between home and abroad (ibid). In Hargeysa, such conduits are also utilised in a whole host of private and public transactions. As Dacaaad, the long-time activist and civil-society leader quipped, 'ID will open the door slightly, but you need to bring someone to get [through]' (Interview, 2014).

Sitting over coffee one evening in 2012 in the Maan-Soor Hotel, Sharif, a director-general of one of Somaliland's ministries, and I talked about the ways in which these intermediary relationships often work. He complained that 'No one comes to me directly. They always bring someone with them who knows me. I say, "I'm here to serve you"' (Interview, 2012). Sharif's lament often falls on deaf ears, he said, because 'public service is rare': the spectre of nepotism hangs over people's encounters with the government, and the expectation is that connections are required. When I interviewed Sharif again in 2014, his opinion had not changed:

Whenever people try to come to me, they are asking people 'what clan is he? Who knows him?' I say to them 'you cannot lose or gain by bringing others. If you come with others that won't influence me.' But they will never listen. They will ask each other: 'what did you do? How did it go?' They don't want to make a mistake so they have to do their homework. Everyone will try to make a connection with you – they will try to find some way of being connected. (Interview, 2014)

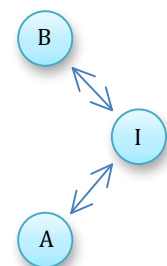
Through genealogical relationality, people are able to utilise resources within the social networks of everyday life. Sometimes these are intervening people, but sometimes this is also simply shared clan. For instance, Haweeyo, a prominent activist and civil society leader, told me this story about how she utilised a genealogical connection to meet with someone she did not know in a UN agency in the 1990s:

I tried to see the officials. It was for the first three days impossible, even to enter the compound. But I found out that there was one guy from my tribe who was working inside, somebody told me, and I said, 'ok, I don't know him but I will use his name'. I was sitting under a tree outside and was talking to the guards, and saying I want to see that guy ... he looks at me and he says 'Do I know you?' I said 'No, no, you don't know me; it's just that I want to go in. I just want to share information with you, so just take me in.' [Once inside] he said, 'do I know you?' And I said 'no, but I'm from such-and-such a tribe'. And he said, 'oh ok'. (Interview, 2012)

Haweeyo was able to convert her tribal connection with the UN officer into a favour. She used clan to make herself legible to this stranger, and thereby enable him to 'speak for' her and endorse her entry into the compound. In her research in Mogadishu, Simons also noted the use of names for access: 'Although money may have bought access on the lowest level – for example, entrance past a guard at the ministry gate – one always had to know who to approach in order to reach the person who could ultimately provide the desired service or assistance' (1995:118). In contemporary Hargeysa, similar processes appear to be at work. For those who are able, access to official institutions is either direct – insiders are personally known – or indirect, facilitated by a phone call to a relative or, sometimes a friend or colleague, who can make the introduction or smooth the encounter by prefacing the matter with the relevant official.

In our discussion, Sharif and I talked about the relationships between these intermediaries and the other parties. Visualised in Figure 2, we discussed how intermediaries (I) are those who have not only relevant relationships with parties A and B (likely clan-related but not necessarily), but also represent the most direct route between them. There may be alternative ways to connect A and B, for instance by going through other people, but 'I' creates what Granovetter calls a 'local bridge': a likely, efficient and cost-effective path (1973:1364). These bridges enable people to access members of their clan that they do not personally know: shared clan, in other words, provides the background condition for a connection.

Figure 2: Vouching interactions.



Source: my illustration.

The continued effectiveness of vouching as facilitating access means that this practice endures. It is the reason that ministry waiting rooms are often populated by close or distant kin of the minister, and members of the respective sub-clan, who seek assistance with a problem related to the minister's portfolio or oftentimes with business relating to another area of government to which they do not have access. As Sharif put it, people 'feel that if you go to the institutions direct, you might miss out' (Interview, 2014). In Somaliland, the apportionment of ministries based on clan, and the corollary clan-based appointments within them, means that, especially for the smaller clans, a minister might be the sub-clan's only representative within the government. Regardless of his portfolio, his unofficial role is as a conduit for those in his network. This is the function for which he has been appointed in the eyes of most of those who supported his parliamentary campaign or, in the case of non-

elected officials, who continue to endorse his position within the ministry. The ability of ministers and MPs to act as *clan* representatives – and hence to represent and mediate these interests – makes them two-way channels. Sharif noted also that sometimes intermediaries help for commercial reasons, rather than just clan obligation; but in both cases, this is ‘legitimate networking’ because ‘you cannot Google them’: they have to be identified by someone he already knows. Daacad of one of Hargeysa’s civil society organisations had a similar understanding, suggesting that an intermediary is necessary when ‘you don’t know the person, to ensure he is saying the truth. That person is the guarantor: they are taking responsibility for the outcome’ (Interview, 2014). In other words, A does not have to trust B, but only I, whose vouchsafing draws on the relational accountability inherent in the clan system. Significantly, therefore, although an act of vouching may involve only a small number of people for a specific favour, it is part of the ‘generalised reciprocity’ that exists within clans (and also sometimes between them), meaning that identity can be verified, and trust shouldered, without expectations about future behaviour or reciprocated favours. Although personal reputations are involved, these are embedded within the reputation of the clan as a whole: when you take a meeting, do a favour, pay a bill for someone, ‘you’re not just supporting this guy, you’re supporting the whole group’ (Dacaad, interview, 2014).

Guarantors

Just as practices of vouching index the genealogical guarantee of clanship, so do the more formalised roles of guarantors. This institution appears to draw on traditional ideas of sponsorship in pastoralist society. In the past, travellers and caravans sought protection through hostile or unknown territory through the institution of *abbaan* (protector, patron). In exchange for payment or gifts, an *abbaan* would guarantee the safe travel of an individual or group through the territories of his lineage (and promise to retaliate should they be harmed), by temporarily extending to them his own connections. Like the accounts of vouching from Whyte and Brooks that I discussed in Chapter 2, an *abbaan* would consent to have his name invoked as a badge of protection, whereby he would temporarily extend his reputation to include those he had promised to protect.

Today this ‘guarantor’ role is found in the figure of the *dammiin* (literally, bail or guarantee) who acts as a witness to significant transactions outside the guarantees of the clan framework, for instance the purchase of property, the registration of land, or the taking out of a loan (Inshaar, interview, 2014b; Sagal, interview, 2014). The important principle, according to Inshaar and Ashkir, is that the *dammiin* is not your *caaqil*, the head of your *mag*-paying group. ‘*Dammiin* should be someone who knows you exactly even if he is not your clan ... Your boss can be your *dammiin*, your friend can be your *dammiin*. It must be a well-known person. Even if you see him in the street, and you can convince him (“there is an urgent situation, please help me”), even if he doesn’t know you before, [he may help you]’ (Inshaar, interview, 2014b). Ashkir argued that an effective *dammiin* is someone who is

from the same clan but ‘higher up’ than the *caaqil*, typically wealthy, prominent businessmen (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). For transactions on a more mundane level, the *dammiin* appears to be any credible person that can take on a trust for you. This *dammiin* practice is therefore similar to the types of counter-signatory and witnessing that I described in Chapter 2 as typical of guarantors. However, in Hargeysa, the use of the *dammiin* does not seem to be explicitly related to identification. Rather, this formal role is given to *caaqils*.

Caaqil Authentication

Caaqils are the ostensible head of the *mag*-paying group, the smallest unit of the Somali clan system. These groups raise blood money (*mag*) for crimes committed by one of their members, and distribute compensation when a crime is committed against them; and are typically composed of relatives with shared patrilineal descent (Lewis, 1994). The *caaqil* is considered to have the best genealogical knowledge since he must collect blood money from all eligible males within his constituency. Since he ‘knows’ his charges – or at least their relative genealogical positioning – the *caaqil* is able to act as an identity verifier. *Caaqils* are expected to know ‘the political relationships, and the social relationships between clans (like my grandmother comes from that clan), [as well as] genealogy and the relationships between genealogies’ (Daacad, interview, 2012). Whilst not all elders have a firm grasp of the great breadth of kin relationships within their particular lineage group (which can run into the thousands), they do memorise the key nodes and junctions so that they are able to settle disputes and disagreements, and help facilitate marriage and other negotiations. *Caaqils* therefore give an answer not only to ‘who are you’ but also ‘who do you claim to be’, since they are able to situate those within their group within the web of interrelationships that make up the genealogical identity system.

As I make clear in the following chapter, *caaqils* are incorporated into the verification protocols for a number of formal identification schemes, for which they ‘convert’ genealogically writ identity into ‘official identity’ that can be used as the basis for the government’s sight (Van Dijk and Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, 1999:5). It is not only genealogical knowledge that makes *caaqils* key authorisers of identity, however, but their role in social life. For instance, the *caaqil*’s endorsement is essential for authenticating a man who seeks to marry. Laughing, Inshaar, my research assistant in his early twenties, exclaimed: ‘If I say I am going to marry a lady, and I call my friends who are the same age as me, everybody [will] say “what’s wrong with you? Where’s your family?”’ (Interview, 2014b) He added: ‘You need your clan in every situation of your life. Her father wants to know who are you, who is your family, where are you belong’ (ibid). In other words, *caaqils* not only verify identity but authenticate it too. For instance, when Idil, a woman in her late twenties who ran her own shop in Hargeysa, sought to adopt a baby from Hargeysa’s main orphanage, she had to bring her *caaqil* to prove who she was – in spite of her European passport and driving license. Her *caaqil*’s vouch was not (only) to identify her, it was to

endorse her as a member of his group, and someone who was supported by her clan should it be required (Interview, 2013). This is a reference to the norms of insurance and protection in the clan system that I discussed above. Caaqils manifest this guarantee in their vouching, which goes beyond simply confirming someone's identity: there is a claim of belonging as well, even of family ties. For instance, Saahid, another young journalist and a friend of Inshaar's, told me that if the caaqil were to verify his identity, he would say 'he is my son' (Interview, 2014).³⁷

For many people, however, a personal relationship with one's caaqil is rare. Some of my interlocutors told me that unless they had had an incident that required intervention, they did not know their caaqil (for instance, Sagal, interview, 2014; Ashkir, interview, 2014b). Inshaar told me that he thought that the 'caaqils are not open to everyone. They always say, "we are a representative to the clan community". But there is a small group who is already in that circle, who have the advantage, who can meet happily every time and ask whatever they want' (Interview, 2014b). He noted that in most cases you need someone to mediate for you: to call the caaqil or his family, and convince him to speak with you. Inshaar told me that he thought that 'knowing the caaqil or needing the caaqil is the reason that goes you [sic] to know your family. It's connected' (ibid). In other words, being able to know and manage connections within family and clan enables one to find the relevant 'stairs' of intervening people. Similarly, Idil told me: 'I know my caaqil because I know his son, and my father and he are close. If our families weren't close, I probably wouldn't have known him. I don't think many people personally know their caaqil' (Interview, 2013).

In the cases of identification that I am describing here, however, caaqil authentication does not technically require that he *knows* a person (in terms of acquaintance or friendship), but that he knows their situatedness within the clan lineage. 'Who you are' is defined according to 'whom you are related to'. This is particularly so for women. One of Hargeysa's chief caaqils explained to me how he verifies the identity of women in the *mag*-paying groups of his sub-clan. 'I know their husbands or their fathers', he replied (Maxamed, interview, 2014). Even though some women in Hargeysa do now pay *mag* (a reflection of the increase in female-headed households and employment opportunities in the post-war period), this only increases the visibility of *these* women to the caaqil. For other women, it remains a mediated legibility. Nevertheless, their genealogical place can still be reckoned, enabling their authentication as a member of a particular clan, and thus as a beneficiary of the norms of reciprocity and protection.

³⁷ However, this is not a benign or sentimental practice: caaqils expect to be paid for their services. Samatar, a young man in his mid-twenties, told me that if you need something from your caaqil, you are expected to 'pay his lunch, car fuel and khat, and his followers' (Interview, 2014). Liibaan, another young man working for a local charity, felt that in the city, assistance by clan leaders has become a business. 'Things have changed. [Before] the tribal leader comes, you set a nice sheet for him [on the ground], and that's it' (Interview, 2012). Now, he complained, 'they want bribes too, they want money. They want a lot of money; it's not just small money. They are there for a business; they are not just there to, you know, "let me help my community"' (ibid). With the Ministry of Interior increasingly paying caaqils to provide 'authentication' (discussed in the previous chapter), the implications of this are an important topic for future research.

Caaqils therefore authenticate identity by drawing on the genealogical idiom and interpreting it in ways that are ‘socially acceptable and emotionally compelling’ (Galvan and Sil, 2007:17). This is part of what Van Dijk and Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal have called the ‘chiefly domain’ of ritual and symbolism, in which traditional authorities can ‘help foster a sense of primordialness and authenticity’ (1999:7). However, this does not mean that their role in identification is uncontested. For instance, in a documentary made by the Academy for Peace and Development, Jama, a business owner from Togdheer, decried the Somaliland government’s use of elders as ‘the colonial approach to governing this society’ (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2012). In individual cases of verification, people told me that the caaqil was a trustworthy source of validation. However, when the stakes are high – such as at election time – using caaqils to authenticate identity may open up such processes to vested interests, feuds, or corruption. Politicised processes of identification thus mean that the personal vouching relationships that turn on integrity and the ‘facts’ of genealogical place may be shifted towards the norms of collective support and reciprocity. It is these considerations that come to the fore in the case study of voter registration that I elucidate in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

Identification in any society is highly intricate and complex, drawing on evaluations of trustworthiness and credibility, and involving triangulation and relative assessment. In this chapter, I have identified genealogical emplacement, clan identification, and vouching as key norms and practices that make up Somaliland’s identity architecture. As I explained at the start of this chapter, my intention has not been to reduce identity in Somaliland to clan identity or to one imbued only with genealogical meaning. Neither have I focused on the genealogical idiom because I see it as all encompassing or singularly important, or because I am offering a reductive or primordialist account. Certainly, Somalilanders use a range of identity markers and resources to know one another, and these have different valences at particular times and in certain spaces. My approach is therefore not to discount other forms of identity or belonging, but rather, as I noted in Chapter 2, to elucidate the ‘unstable points of identification’ rather than the multiple, shifting and sophisticated identities that people have.

I have argued in this chapter that genealogy provides a framework of relationality in which knowing-one’s-place means knowing how one is related to other people’s ‘places’, and the pathways between them. Genealogy appears to function as both a highly relative construction that shifts depending upon who you are talking to (as in the conventions of ‘yaad tahay?’); and a social knowledge structure that fixes relations to ancestors and key relatives. People therefore find that their identity is made legible to others – for identification, the mapping of connections, and the use of intermediaries – by reference to their genealogical position and their relationality to other people. Ugbaad, a politician who lived many years abroad, told me that she would ‘value an ID that says my name is X. But to

the population, I am the daughter of X, and the wife of X and the mother of X. When I was in the UK, I didn't understand that' (Interview, 2014).

In this chapter, I have described how these genealogical relationships enable vouching, a mundane though significant practice in which people's identity is corroborated according to their relationships with others (1-in-many verification) and the context at hand. Vouching in Somaliland is possible because of norms of trust, reciprocity, and connectedness, and which similarly underwrite vernacular forms of verification. However, this does not mean that these practices are necessarily inclusive or fair. In this chapter, I have argued that the invocation of genealogy in identification is highly power-laden, creating grounds for exclusion and inequality in Somaliland society. I discussed how the genealogical idiom produces notions of 'authentic' Somalilandness based on ancestral recitation, prestigious descent, and generational breadth, which disregard certain groups that are placed beyond these majoritarian frames of reference. When identification utilises, explicitly or implicitly, genealogical situatedness or clan identity, these encoded meanings about authenticity, status and prestige are reproduced, enhancing the exclusion of marginalised groups. There are therefore important implications for equality and inclusion if official proof of identity requires that your ancestors, elders or kinsmen must vouch for you and, more specifically, verify and validate your place within the genealogical frame.

In the chapters that follow, I explore how genealogical situatedness, clan identity and caaqil authentication work in the context of official identification schema. In the next chapter, I trace the integration of these practices over time, and show how ID card programmes in Somaliland actively incorporate caaqil guarantors as a pragmatic solution to the verification problem. I argue that the narratives of authenticity, unity and temporality underlying the genealogical idiom that I explicated in this chapter are essential to broader state-building and nation-building efforts that serve to present a convincing case of Somaliland's authenticity. However, this does not mean that this is unproblematic, and I therefore highlight the complex and highly political ways that the vernacular and the official work together in Somaliland's identity architecture

Chapter 4

State-Building and Legibility in Somaliland

A meshwork of regular or sporadic interactions and negotiations is in place whose unfolding depends as much on the practice of the different institutions involved as it does on the initiative of citizens and social groups (Santos, 2006:66–67).

Passports, green cards, or driver's licenses are worthless without the social relations that produce them (Gordillo, 2006:173)

In this chapter, I trace the development and institutionalisation of different forms of official 'legibility' in Somaliland as part of its state-building and political consolidation. I show how processes of naming and delineating by state authorities have important implications for how Somalilanders are seen by the state, and indeed how the nation-state itself has been constructed on the basis of genealogically derived notions of belonging.

I begin by tracing the dynamics between clan and state institutions during Somaliland's history, arguing that official legibility has been repeatedly undergirded by genealogical logic, not least in the way that clan identity worked as the principal 'text' of identity in the aftermath of the civil war, when identity documentation was lost, mistrust and insecurity was high, and verifiable claims of belonging had to be made. Since 1991, clanship and genealogy have become important aspects of Somaliland's political system. This is particularly notable in the citizenship regime, which is framed explicitly by these historical and political factors, formalising genealogy as the basis of Somaliland nationality, and thus inscribing ideas of authentic Somalilandness within the formal frameworks of official legibility.

In the second part of the chapter, I lay out the components of the contemporary state's documentary infrastructure, briefly examining each form of ID in turn, and showing how the state substitutes its lack of official legibility with the 'metic' legibility of guarantors, most notably caaqils. Some people do, of course, have documents or other ways of establishing a 'chain of verification' that state officials can use to verify identity. In general, however, Somaliland's identity-management infrastructure is fragmentary and under-resourced, making vernacular practices of identification particularly prominent and important. To gain the synoptic sight of modern statecraft, the Somaliland state must therefore address the disconnected terrain of official identification through the development of new techniques and technologies of identification. The discussion in this chapter thus sets up the extended case study of biometric voter registration in Chapter 5 and the discussion of the new national ID card in Chapter 6, which analyse how Somaliland's political actors have sought to address the state's verification problem.

Between Clans and the State: Ruptures and Continuities

The significance of genealogy as a way of making Somali society ‘readable’ has ebbed and flowed in history depending on the environmental conditions of security and stability, and its invocation or rejection by different authorities as the principal lens of identification.¹ It has, however, appeared to be a resilient and powerful framework for identification that has endured longer than nationalism and pan-Somali solidarity (Cassanelli, 2010:56).

The Colonial Period

Genealogy and clan identity was arguably the most important frame for identification in the first decades of the British Protectorate (1884–1960). This form of minimalist colonial administration had emerged in the late nineteenth century in an effort to secure livestock exports for the British garrison at Aden. In signing friendship and protection agreements with clan ‘representatives’, the British administrators demonstrated that they saw Somalis in the territory principally in terms of ‘tribes’. From around 1893 onwards, the resident administrators undertook ethnographic studies and geographic surveys of the coastal areas and internal caravan routes, by which to better understand the lay of the land (see, for instance, Swayne, 1996). These endeavours sought principally to demarcate tribal areas, with loose ‘dotted lines’ sketching the extent of each clan’s domain to understand who resided where (see Map 3). This was in part to determine which protection agreements applied when caravans moved through different parts of the interior towards the main trading port of Berbera. It was also part of the colonial authorities’ obsession with order: of creating manageable ways of ‘reading’ the local population and territory so that it could be controlled by recourse to regulation and rule, rather than the sparse resources of money and arms. As Scott has argued, the colonial administrators did not ‘merely describe, observe, and map’, but sought to ‘shape a people and landscape that ... fit their techniques of observation’ (1998:82). Today these ‘regions’ are acutely political designations, not least because of the way they map onto electoral constituencies and how power has become distributed in the Somaliland political system.

The British administrators also recorded genealogies in order to understand the interrelationships between different groups. Their dependence upon genealogy for identification of Somalis – not only in terms of personal identity, but whether they were in fact ‘Somaliland’ clans and hence under their purview – made this a primary scheme of legibility (Cassanelli, 2010). However, the recording of orally transmitted lineages could not capture the great flexibility of genealogical relationships, and so only gave limited insight into how the Somali clan system really worked. The segmentary nature of Somali nomadic pastoralism means that clan relationships are constantly in flux, as marriage, contract and

¹ I do not include a formal ‘historical’ overview of Somaliland’s pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence periods. This has been done fulsomely and effectively by a number of existing accounts, and I refer readers to these, particularly: Balthasar, 2012; Bradbury, 2008; Samatar, 1988; Walls, 2011 and 2014.

alliance (as well as idiosyncratic historical and personal relations) bring sub-clans together in shifting configurations. '[C]olonial anthropology could find no other alternative but to rely too heavily on the genealogical table', states Jama (2007:241). But this dependence was myopic, he argues: 'How could one fix it as a chart if it is not fixed and if it is always already in flux?' (2007:241) The point of such legibilising endeavours *was* of course to fix the population in order to provide a synoptic view of the Somaliland clans, and clan identity was understood as the key to identifying whether someone was a resident and hence a British subject (see Cassanelli, 2010).

The British Protectorate was governed via indirect rule. In keeping with the overall parsimony towards the territory, British Somaliland was maintained by a stripped-down administration,² relying instead on 'native' forces and friendly clans, particularly those of the Isaaq (Bradbury, 2008:2). In other parts of Africa, the British worked through representatives or intermediaries, but in the predominantly acephalous nomadic society of Somaliland, there were no such individuals. Rather, the 'elders' of the clan were men of many ages and sorts who engaged in temporary councils when disputes or other matters needed to be resolved. The British administration thus continued the Ottoman practice of compensating cooperative *suldaans* as clan chiefs, and appointing and paying representatives of *mag*-paying groups called *caaqils* (Gundel, 2006; Lewis, 1958:249). Together with Islamic judges and armed tribesmen who served as 'rural police', this invented position of *caaqil* (chief) created a layer of intermediary governance between the sparse British administration and the clans (Bradbury, 2008:28), and in this sense the approach was more similar to the French in West Africa who made new appointments at the level of *chefs de canton* and *chefs du village* (see Conklin, 1997). *Caaqils* became channels of access and patronage, with the colonial administration using them as gophers for tax collection, conflict management, law enforcement and transmitted authority; whilst the *caaqils* extracted subsidies and special privileges in return, and solidified their positions as titled elders (Bradbury, 2008:28–29; Lewis, 2002; Renders, 2012:36).

The British colonial authorities thus depended upon *caaqils* to make the Somaliland people 'legible', and in doing so, contributed to making *caaqils* the gatekeepers of identification, and genealogy its idiom. The prominence of *caaqils* in the colonial administration's structures of authority established a precedent that has found purchase in Somaliland's contemporary state-building practices, as I described in the previous chapter, and which will again be prominent in my account of the 2008–10 voter registration.

² Indeed, the Protectorate was not a typical colony, but a minimalist intervention, with much less extraction and taxation than in the Empire's other interests.

From Cousin to Comrade

The period from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s reflects a long ‘continuity’ in which clans were considered the principal repositories of identity by the state.³ When it finally elucidated Somalilanders’ legal status in the inter-war period, the Protectorate used a territorial conception of legal identity drawing on the 1934 British Protected Persons (BPP) Order, according to which a person ‘belonged to the territory’ if they were born within the territory without some other nationality, or born to a father who himself was born within the territory (UK Border Agency, nd). This was not of course citizenship, but it opened the door to a conceptualisation of official identity that was not based on the clan. The issuance of passports to BPPs formalised this status with accredited paperwork. This therefore marked a shift towards identification based on personal rather than clan identity, reflected also in the first citizenship law of 1960 which gave Somalis legal status as individuals and not as clan members (Protectorate of Somaliland, 1960).

This shift seemed to be cemented by the independence of Somaliland from colonial rule in 1960.⁴ Overnight people became citizens of a new state – and in fact citizens of a larger republic when Somaliland united four days later on 1 July with the former Italian colony of Somalia. However, Somalia and Somaliland had been governed very differently under colonialism, with different legal systems, currencies, educational and taxation systems, varying organisational frameworks for the armed forces and civil service, and different approaches to the co-option of traditional power structures (see Battera and Campo, 2001; Lewis, 2002; Walls, 2014). With union, the idea of Somalilandness that had developed under the Protectorate came into juxtaposition with the notion of Somaliness developed under Italian colonialism. Although this was a time of nationalist fervour, with calls for *Somaliweyn* (Greater Somalia) heralding a pan-Somali ethnic solidarity, the north-south division remained resilient.⁵ Despite efforts to integrate, the different ‘rules of the mind’ that arose from decades of differential governance made it difficult to agree shared ‘rules of the game’ (Balthasar, 2012:98–101). Moreover, clannism (at the level of high politics at least) did not ‘wither away’ in favour of nationalism. Both the 1967 presidential and 1969 parliamentary elections were fraught with internal politicking and corruption; and the proliferation of political parties that were no more than thinly disguised clan platforms promoting the interests of particular lineages (Lewis, 1958; 2004). The domination of particular clans in government institutions led to the politicisation of clanship as each sub-clan vied to control key resources. Although government appointments were theoretically made on merit, Samatar and Samatar note that the tendency of people to visit their elected official in person created the impression that ministries were allocated along clan lines: ‘a

³ For more on Somaliland under the Protectorate, see Hall, 1961; Lewis, 2002; and Millman, 2013.

⁴ See Colonial Office (1960), Hall (1961), Lewis (1958) and Millman (2013) on this period.

⁵ Northerners apparently disparagingly called southerners ‘*weliweyn*’, a reference to the village near Afgoye that returned an impossible 90,000 votes in the 1964 election, giving it an electorate larger than Hargeysa or Burco (Fowsi, interview, 2014). This fraud was said to capture the character of the south. The southerners meanwhile called the north ‘*qaldan*’, meaning the wrong, ‘crazy’, mistaken Somalis, a dig at the fact that the north had joined the union without even asking for the presidency or the capital (ibid). See also Lewis, 2002:169.

false conclusion, but it *appeared* to be so' (2002:61, note 16; emphasis in original). It seemed that the anti-clannist aspirations of the pre-independence nationalist movement had been fatally eroded: no longer 'Africa's First Democrats' (ibid), Somalia became *Dowladdii Musuqmaasuqa* ('the corrupt government') (Ayfare, 2010:19).

A military coup on 21 October 1969 was billed as the antidote to 'the malicious system of tribalism in every form, and all other bad customs in state activities' (Barre, cited in Samatar, 1988:85). The subsequent 'Socialist Revolution' was directed towards nationalism and self-reliance, and against clannism, which was likened to a primitive 'disease' that hindered progress. At a rally on Labour Day 1970, for instance, one of the speechmakers warned Somalis against a 'weakness for tribal allegiance', calling on them to 'get rid of this immediately' (Dawn Newspaper, 1970). New leader Major-General Mohamed Siyad Barre argued that competition between clans was based upon notions of superiority that, in keeping with socialist principles, were not found in nature or history: 'Strong tribes force smaller ones to submit to subordination in the process of struggling for grazing and water. It is astonishing that even degree-holders believe in this myth of the superiority of birth', he declared in the first year of the revolution (Speech to Senior Officials, 1970).

The new Socialist Revolutionary Council (SRC) therefore initiated policies of collectivisation, urbanisation and modernisation, accompanied by an attempt to forge a 'citizen comrade' in contradistinction to the clannish figure that had seemed to dominate politics in the brief period of civilian government after 1960. 'Revolutionary youth' embodied the 'ideal new citizen whose dedication to his country was pure and untarnished by atavistic kinship allegiances' (Lewis, 2002:209–12). Citizens of the Somali Republic were encouraged to display the hallmarks of socialism through political training at 'orientation centres'; effigies representing 'tribalism' were burned or buried; and 'traditional' social events were shifted from the home and clan meetings to 'orientation centres' (Balthasar, 2012:108; Brons, 2001:172–73; Lewis, 2002:209). Together with other far-reaching social changes, the SRC also continued the civilian government's efforts to eliminate the practice of blood compensation (*mag*),⁶ shifting criminal responsibility from the collective to the individual, and abolishing – formally at least – that deeply embedded conflict resolution mechanism (Balthasar, 2012:98). Meanwhile, the *caaqils* and *suldaans* that had been empowered under colonialism, and who had been incorporated into the state after independence, were replaced by government-appointed officials or renamed *nabad-doon* ('peacemaker') (Lewis, 2002).

⁶ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of *mag*.

On the face of it, these changes penetrated into all aspects of the clan system, with the ceremonial ‘burial’ of clannism in villages and towns, and the replacement of the traditional greeting *ina’adeer* (‘cousin’) with *jaalle* meaning ‘comrade’.⁷ The everyday reality was, however, farcical: Lewis (1994:88) notes that people, unable to ask directly about clan, talked about ‘exs’ (i.e. ‘ex-lineages’). But clans were still primary sites of identity, security and resources (Abbink, 2003:349). As Brons puts it, ‘the state did not succeed in replacing non-state institutions, falling far short of what the clan network offered to society’ (2001:173). For all Barre’s bluster against tribalism, nepotism, corruption and patronage coursed through the veins of the administration (Drysdale, 1992; Lewis, 1994:84). Indeed, in the post-1978 period (after a devastating drought and war in the Ogaden⁸), Barre openly relied on his paternal and matrilineal clans (Brons, 2001; Lewis, 2002; Walls, 2014).

Although ‘Somalilandness’ might not have been a coherent political narrative at the time, the invocation of clan identity at the top levels of government resurrected the reading of the population in terms of clans, and thus resurrected a political distinction between northern and southern clans. This had important ramifications for the articulation of resistance and the strategies of repression that characterised the 1980s and eventually the civil war, since these were framed as actions by and against particular clans. In this way, although it is not the case that there was a consolidated Somaliland identity at this time, the power of these juxtaposing narratives served to bring into relief the enduring disparity between Mogadishu and the north. Asad, a former SNM officer I interviewed in 2012, argued that issues of identity and citizenship were major drivers for the war. Having now worked for a number of years with civil society and the government to build up the Somaliland state, he was adamant that:

You ask someone why they are fighting, and he will tell you because my basic rights have been violated, my father has been killed, Hargeysa has been demolished. Then there are some who would say I was fighting for my identity, I was fighting to be a proper citizen, to be a citizen of Somaliland, to be a citizen of Hargeysa. (Interview, 2012)

Asad claimed people wanted to be ‘proper citizens’, pointing to differentiations in status despite formal civic equality that Migdal (2006) has called ‘graduated citizenship’. This is the idea that there are different levels of formal rights and obligations, but also that there are different affective expressions of belonging: some groups feel they *really* belong, whilst other groups do not; some groups feel the state is theirs and not others’ (ibid). Although formally northern Somalis were incorporated into the state, their actual abilities to claim the

⁷ The salutary term *adeer* (uncle) or *ina’adeer* (cousin) is used to refer to patrilineal kin of the same generation and also for strangers. Lewis reports that up to its decline in the mid-1970s, *jaalle* ‘enjoyed a certain official currency on the radio and in written documents’, but in public, people did not tend to use it (1994:84, 87–88).

⁸ A severe drought in 1974–75, which put the regime under pressure, was followed by the 1977–78 war for ‘Western Somalia’, which was a military and financial failure. Ogaden Somalis fled Ethiopia leading to a massive refugee crisis (described at the time as the worst in the world, Balthasar, 2012:124). The channelling of these refugees into the north created great resentment, particularly amongst the Isaaq who felt threatened by the influx of pro-Barre Ogadeni. Balthasar argues that these three events led to the fragmentation of national identity, accompanied by a ‘re-tribalisation’ of Somaliland society (ibid:124–25).

entitlements of citizenship were affected by geographical and psychological distance from the capital. Asad argued that the supposed inclusiveness of the definition of a citizen of the Somali Republic (see below) was false, and that being from Hargeysa made him a second-class citizen. For instance, he told me that it was extremely difficult to obtain a passport under the Barre regime, since these were closely controlled by the central government. But as an Isaaq it was doubly difficult, if not impossible – in fact, one had to falsify documents, writing that one was born in, for example, the Ogaden (where Barre's matrilineal clan was based), rather than Hargeysa. 'You could see how you'd feel in such a situation when you're really a citizen of Hargeysa and they tell you to write that you were born in Jigjiga? Why shouldn't I write that I am from Hargeysa?' (Interview, 2013a)

This abjuration of northern identity increased after 1981, particularly after the shift towards authoritarianism by the regime in Mogadishu saw the appointment of an army chief who, as 'virtual governor of the north', authorised disappearances and imprisonments (Mohamed, 2010:32). The ostracism of many northern people from the regime was symbolised by the targeting of a group of doctors and teachers who had been engaged in 'self-help' activities to redress the poor state of local public services (Brons, 2001:62). After fundraising for hospital supplies for the Hargeysa Group Hospital and organising for other social projects, the so-called Hargeysa Group was accused of sedition and crimes against the state: they were detained, tortured, subjected to a show trial, and imprisoned for years in solitary confinement (Mohamed, 2010; Jama, 2003). During the trial, huge student demonstrations became riots in which the students threw rocks at the assembled security forces, who then returned fire, killing some and arresting hundreds of others. That day, 20 February 1982, is known as 'Dhagax Tuur' (stone-throwing) and signalled the beginning of organised resistance against Barre. Although the thirty years between Somaliland's two independences did not include active nation-making by political actors in Somaliland, my argument is that, rather than producing legibility, the Barre regime's crude efforts at standardisation and homogenisation, actually made it short-sighted towards its periphery, which fertilised the soil for the articulation of Somalilandness when neglect turned to cruelty in the late 1980s.

Barre's late leadership had reconstituted clan as the primary conduit for political power and prestige, and it was in these terms that opposition was mounted by the Majerteen, Warsengeli and Dhulbahante clans forming the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), and members of the Isaaq clan assembling as the Somali National Movement (SNM).⁹ By 1990, Somalia was embroiled in chronic violence and warfare. Virginia Luling, present in Afgoye in August 1989, wrote 'things were falling apart and everybody knew it'. One man said to her, 'Everything is uncertain, there is no respect for the law. We are like people in the dark' (2002:37). As the civil war escalated, the fight that had been between Somalia's largest clan-families descended into bloody conflict within clans and even within sub-clans,

⁹ For a discussion of the establishment and actions of the SNM, see Balthasar, 2012:133–34, 139–41; Bradbury, 2008:60–73; Brons, 2001:185, 202; Walls, 2014:150–51.

resulting in unpredictable, localised and internecine squabbles and struggles that devolved warfare to the lowest levels of society (Menkhaus, 2004:30; Kusow, 2004).

The ‘Passport’ of Clan Identity

In the post-independence period we thus see a tension between ideological opposition to clan structures as the grounds of political mobilisation and identification, and their sensible utilisation in the face of power struggles. Certainly in choosing between remaining in the fight for a united Somali republic and withdrawing to build a new state, the SNM fighters and northern political leaders chose the latter strategy of pragmatism. Instead of decrying clan and lineage as the nationalists had done in the run-up to 1960, the (re)constitution of Somaliland was undertaken with the explicit incorporation of clan elders, who sat as representatives of the different northern groups at a series of successive conferences in 1991, 1993 and 1997. These established the institutions of a new state, including political organs and processes, economic management, security and a justice system.¹⁰ During the war, an *ad hoc* council of clan elders (*guurti*) had helped to resolve conflict amongst the SNM leadership.¹¹ Now convocations of clan representatives used traditional consensus-building to bring non-Isaaq (and pro-Barre) clans into the political fold, negotiated a broad amnesty and disarmament,¹² and enabled the power-sharing that continues to structure contemporary politics. Renders (2010:728). Similarly, Balthasar argues that it was the power of the clan elders to shape and obtain political agreement that confirmed their inclusion in – and indeed centrality to – the emerging leadership, which became ‘hostage’ to the elders (2012:143). Such an account contravenes the common political narrative that the SNM sought to blend together traditional and modern forms of political organisation (Bradbury, 2008:69); however, whether by design or default, it is clear that collaboration between clan and ‘political’ institutions was forged into the DNA of Somaliland’s new state blueprint.

Despite the formal inter-clan and SNM-clan co-operation at the level of national mediation, it remained the case that deep reservoirs of inter-clan mistrust remained at a societal level. Northern kinsmen had been declared co-nationals in a new republic, but that did not ease the emotional burden of co-existence. ‘During the conflict, members of communities who had grown up together as families, but belonged to different clans, had found themselves on opposing sides, at war with one another’ (SCPD, 1999:24–25). The level of fear, mistrust and

¹⁰ Hagmann and Hoehne (2009:51) make a similar argument. On the details of the conferences, see APD, 2008; Balthasar, 2012:152–54; Bradbury, 2008:95–105, 124–27; Walls, 2014:165–204.

¹¹ Balthasar’s research suggests that the *guurti* is not a ‘traditional’ institution but one formed in the mid 1980s as an advisory body to the SNM because ‘the young officers who had deserted the SNA [Somali National Army] for the SNM had very little idea about how the clan system worked’ (2012:142). This reinforces the point made in Chapter 2 that the ascription of ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’ must be done carefully and mindfully.

¹² The SNM’s doctrine of ‘clan self-determination’ held that no clan could liberate or subjugate another (Balthasar, 2012:137; Bradbury, 2008:79). An amnesty was agreed with representatives from the non-Isaaq clans, preventing recriminations and revenge attacks (although some fighting did take place). Balthasar suggests that this was more from pragmatism than principle, however, since the SNM could not hold non-Isaaq territories and did not want to foment anti-Isaaq opposition (2012:137–38).

insecurity during the civil war had important implications for Somali identity, not least in terms of how to identify oneself. With people coming from the south, from Ethiopia and displaced within the north, the task of identifying who was who was enormous. In the chaos of secession, violence and displacement, who, indeed, was a Somalilander?

In the years leading up to and after 1991, tens of thousands of northern Somalis fled the fighting in Mogadishu and the repercussions of the conflict's clan factionalism, seeking the home territories of maternal or paternal clans. An estimated 400,000–500,000 northern Somalis fled to Ethiopia, whilst another 400,000 were internally displaced (World Bank, cited in Harris with Foresti, 2011:5). In the context of the violence and 'cleansing' that was taking place between clans in the brutalising civil war (Kapteijns, 2012; Hoehne, 2015), clan identities became 'passports': to come under the protection of the northern clans, one had to prove one's lineage. Genealogy thus acted as a social password to Somaliland belonging. For those who could not make this claim, or did not know it, their identity could not be verified. For instance, in an apocryphal tale recounted by Yusuf (2008), two young men of the Darood clan-family seek to escape the vengeance and persecution of the dying Barre regime in Mogadishu to head to the safe haven offered by their mother's clan, the Isaaq. However, despite her protestations, the brothers refuse to learn their mother's *abtirsiino*, which would enable them to authenticate themselves as Isaacs. The young men consider themselves to be 'modern' Somalis, and deride the genealogy as 'the names of a bunch of ancestors who've been dead for centuries' (Luling, 2006:476). However, after a long journey and upon finally approaching Burco, the car in which they are travelling is pulled over by armed guards, and everyone is ordered to identify themselves. The other passengers name their clans and sub-clans, and also recite 'a list of their forefathers' names in reverse order – the same way their mother tried to teach them' (Yusuf, 2008:58). The brothers cannot do so, and, unable to prove their Isaaq identity, the brothers are executed as spies. 'True' Somalilanders were thus not only from northern lineages, but could recite their ancestors and knew their own history.

Such was the levels of distrust, anger and confusion in the context of the conflict that it was vital for new arrivals or returnees to display the hallmarks of northern-ness or 'Somalilandness'. This included having the 'northern' accent. In 1972, the SRC had undertaken a civic nation-building programme with the development of an official Somali script¹³ and an ambitious crash course to educate first urban civil servants, ministers and teachers, and then the entire country via pioneering students who took to the countryside to tutor the rural and urban population (Lewis, 2002:217). Barre described the literacy campaign as 'the weapon to eradicate social balkanization and fragmentation into tribes and

¹³ The Somali language – the syntax of an oral people – had never had need of inscription; and colonial officials had worked in English and Italian. Competing scripts had emerged based on Arabic and Roman alphabets, and the latter was ultimately chosen as the Somali common hand in 1972.

sects' (ibid).¹⁴ It had also served another purpose, which was to delegitimise English as a national language of politics. This is important because English had been the language of government in the British Protectorate, and until this time had been an official language of Somalia and was still used in Somaliland (Gaani, interview, 2014). This language politics was thus a move to assert control over the definition of Somaliness, simultaneously redefining aspects of Somalilandness.

Despite the authoritarian imposition of the new script, dialects still divided Somalis, not only in terms of vocabulary and grammar but also simply in terms of accent. Upon the secession of Somaliland in 1991, it quickly became clear who had been living in the 'south' and who in the north once people opened their mouths. For instance, Qasim, a civil servant, told me his story about 'proving' his northern credentials. He had fled Mogadishu with his family in 1990, spending a year in a UNHCR camp in the Somali region of Ethiopia, before finally coming to Hargeysa at the end of 1992. In 2013, he quietly told me how he had been required to abandon his Mogadishu accent through 're-education' amongst nomadic relatives:

It was a very dramatic change. When we came to the refugee camp in 1991, the Hargeysa people [had already come] to Ethiopia. We were using the Mogadishu accent. Our relatives there were becoming too angry: 'why are you speaking this accent? They are the people who have destroyed our homes. Why are you speaking? You should change that accent.' They were saying to mum and father, 'please tell your children to speak our accent'. That is the reason my father took me to the countryside. I did not understand [why I had to go], but my father told me later. I asked him 'why did you take me to the countryside at that time?' I told him very horrible stories of the wild animals. A little child who came from Mogadishu, it was one of the most beautiful cities in the Horn of Africa, then going to the countryside. It was really a very bad state. So I asked him 'why were you endangering myself Dad?' He told me the reason was 'to change your accent, to become a Somalilander. These are your people.' (Interview, 2013)

This conception of the Somalilander identity that Qasim describes draws very much on implicit (and sometimes explicit) narratives of authenticity and trust in the face of insecurity and vulnerability. The traumatic experiences of the war, in particular the clan-based violence, brought clan to the fore as a principal marker of identity and political affiliation. The use of this social institution, complete with identities, norms and rules, was an important coping mechanism – minimising risk and increasing predictability – and demonstrates the adaptation that characterised Somaliland's post-war reconstitution

¹⁴ It was a blunt tool of nation-building, however, excluding the other languages spoken in Somalia, not least Af-Maay (also called May May) spoken in the inter-riverine area of southern Somalia. Commonly mislabelled a dialect, it is considered a different language, unintelligible to most speakers of standard Somali, which is drawn from the northern pastoralists, in a relationship similar to Spanish and Portuguese (Lewis, 2002; Lewis, 2008:3). In addition, the Bravanese, the people of the former city-state of Barawe, speak their own dialect, a version of Swahili; the Kibajuni also speaks another type of Swahili, whilst the Mushunguli traditionally speaks a Bantu language (Menkhaus, 2010:93). These minority languages were not granted official status, even under Barre's relatively enlightened approach to minorities, and the codification of Af-Somaaliga, the language of the Samaale, further entrenched a boundary around the 'noble' clans of the Issa, Gadabuursi, Isaaq and Hawiye, separating them from the Sab, the oft-denigrated descendants of a separate founding ancestor in the national genealogy. Nevertheless, the development of a standard script and its widespread adoption is one of Barre's enduring legacies; despite the bloody divisions of recent history, it remains the official language across all of the contemporary Somali governments.

(Menkhaus, 2006). In particular, it makes a clear case for why the nascent state leveraged clan identity as a frame of legibility.

‘All the Background of People was Lost’

As I described in Chapter 1, returning to Somaliland after the war required a hazardous journey during which people lost or were robbed of everything of value, and were at risk of illness, injury and death. Paperwork – government-issued ID or passports – was of ambiguous use on the road from collapse to chaos, and those who had it often had left it behind or had it taken from them. ‘They took everything, even my birthday certificate. Now I do not have it’, recalled Qasim (Interview, 2013). Nur, a retired immigration official now in his sixties who had also been in Hargeysa in Somaliland’s first years, pressed home the impact of the civil war and the way it stripped people of ways of proving their identity:

This country was destroyed, and all the documents were lost or destroyed by the civil war. The people who used to hold these documents have passed away. In 1991, there was no kind of life in Hargeysa – no schools, no buildings for offices to work in, no homes to live in. All the background of the people [was] lost. (Interview, 2014)

Nur pressed home the impact of the civil war and the way it stripped people of their material welfare and also their ‘backgrounds’. People were no longer citizens of the Somali Republic; this official identity was indeed lost. However, another ‘background’ remained: Nur confirmed what other people had told me, which was the key to identity verification was knowledge of one’s clan and lineage. ‘Clan was the only system and we were prepared to use it’ (ibid). Clan identity was the principal form of identity authentication for officials of the early administration even in cases where it attempted to use more formalised documentation. For instance, in the mid-1990s, the government of Muhammad Haji Ibrahim Egal, in conjunction with the UN and the Ethiopian government, undertook a process of *tirakoob* (literally, rounding up of figures, or generally census or statistics). Using border-crossing numbers and UNHCR documentation, the administration attempted to enumerate its new population. However, it was extremely difficult, noted Yaasmiin, a businesswoman I interviewed about this period: ‘A lot of people were living in other places, a lot of people were missing, a lot of people were dead’ (Interview, 2014). As a population estimate it might have had some crude utility;¹⁵ however, as a form of identity registration, it did not, since there was no paperwork trail – no chain of verification – with which to assess nationals’ identity or document ‘Somalilander’ status. Yaasmiin recollected that agents of the *tirakoob* neither created nor demanded identity documentation. Rather, it was clear that the process of making Somalilanders legible depended upon genealogical and linguistic verification: ‘All the *reer* [people, nation] Somaliland know each other [and] know the language, so they knew who was a Somalilander’ (Yaasmiin, interview, 2014; translated by Ashkir). Hence we again see the importance of the informal ways of verifying identity that I

¹⁵ Gaani, a senior civil servant, told me that the population figure of 3 million that became Somaliland’s demographic benchmark came from this process, but was based on estimates and thus, he implied, statistically unreliable (Interview, 2014). A figure of 3.5 million is more commonly quoted today, but this is also based on projected estimates.

introduced above, and which form the basis of the vernacular legibility that I discussed in the previous chapter.

Genealogical Citizenship

These emerging conceptions of the Somalilander identity drew very much on implicit (and sometimes explicit) narratives of authenticity and trust in the face of insecurity and vulnerability. The traumatic experiences of the war, in particular the clan-based violence, brought clan to the fore as a principal marker of identity and political affiliation. The use of this social institution, complete with identities, norms and rules, was an important coping mechanism – minimising risk and increasing predictability – and demonstrates the adaptation that has characterised Somaliland’s post-war reconstitution (Menkhaus, 2006).

It is therefore not surprising that these identities should figure prominently in Somaliland’s citizenship law, a core statement about how it sees the legal members of the state, and thus integral to its construction of official legibility. The Somaliland government first formally defined Somaliland citizenship in Article 4 of the 2001 constitution, stating that a citizen is:

Any person who is a patrilineal of Somaliland being a descendant of a person residing in Somaliland on 26 June 1960 or earlier shall be recognised as a citizen of Somaliland.
(Republic of Somaliland, 2001)

Further codification of Somaliland’s citizenship regime came in Law No. 22/2002. It was ‘an essential constitutional duty that should have been undertaken much earlier’ (Ibrahim, personal correspondence, 2013); and was allegedly rushed and uninformed, without lawyers on the drafting committee (Shermarke, interview, 2013). Unlike previous citizenship laws which defined a citizen as ‘any person who by origin, language or tradition belongs to the Somali Nation shall be considered a “Somali”’ (Republic of Somalia, 1963: Article 3),¹⁶ the 2002 Somaliland law reflected a desire to separate ethnicity and nationality. ‘Somali’ would now be an all-encompassing ethnicity that could apply to both Somalilanders and those of the Somali Republic – and indeed, those of Somali ethnic origin living in the near and far diaspora. ‘Somalilander’, on the other hand, was explicitly a national identity, the contours and parameters of which would be defined genealogically and territorially. The essential characteristic of the 2002 law was therefore the emphasis on descent as the key criterion for citizenship. Like Article 4 of the constitution, Law No. 22/2002 defines a Somaliland citizen as:

¹⁶ The temporary Somaliland law in 1960 defined a citizen as ‘any person whose mother tongue is the Somali language and who follows Somali customs’ (Draft Somaliland Ordinance, 1960:7(ii); also Protectorate of Somaliland, 1960). In co-defining citizens and co-ethnics, the citizenship laws thus had clear political implications for who would be included in the new Somali nation. Indeed, the union citizenship law drew on this language, coming into force on 22 December 1961. British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd wrote to the British Consulate-General in Mogadishu in March 1960 expressing concern that the new Somali Republic law contained a ‘regrettable absence of definition, and indeterminate words and phrases such as “Somali”, “established residence”, “native of the territory” can only lead to unnecessary misunderstanding’ (Circular Savingram, 1960a, 1960b). In fact, Somaliland’s citizenship law was similarly ambiguous.

An individual who descended from persons who were resident in the territory of Somaliland on 26 June 1960 or before, ... [or] a person who had Somaliland citizenship conferred on him lawfully. (Republic of Somaliland, 2002: Article 1)

Like the constitutional article, this is a key statement about not only the identity of Somaliland citizens, but about the identity of the Somaliland nation as a whole. Dorman notes that attitudes towards citizenship are shaped by the political culture and historical experience of countries (2014:170); certainly in Somaliland's case, the formulation of its citizenship scheme, and the way it is digested and enacted, shows the imprint of its past. A literal reading of these articles suggests a *jus solis* interpretation, which fits with the assertion of territorial contiguity with the British Protectorate on which Somaliland's claim to statehood rests. The British Protectorate had used a territorial conception of legal identity when it finally elucidated Somaliland status after the Second World War. According to the 1934 British Protected Persons [BPP] Order, a person had 'belonged to the territory' if they were born within the territory without some other nationality, or born to a father who himself was born within the territory.¹⁷

However, there is obviously also a strong emphasis on descent, and the use of the term 'patrilial' makes clear the 'genealogical logic' at work. This genealogical basis is part of the boundary-making function of citizenship in which states 'make strangers' in order to 'make the nation' (Dorman, Hammett and Nugent, 2007). In this case, the drafters of the Somaliland citizenship law sought to move away from the ethnic basis of previous Somali citizenship rules in order to legally demarcate Somaliland citizens from those of Somalia. No longer were citizens to be 'any person who by origin, language or tradition belongs to the Somali Nation' (Republic of Somalia, 1963) – Somaliland citizens were those who effectively came from the northern clans, excluding Somalis with other lineages.¹⁸

Of course, Somaliland was not in 2001, nor is it today, a politically and socially coherent nation in light of the long-lived contestation of this dominant imagining of Somaliland by people in Sool, Sanaag and Awdal. Building genealogy into citizenship nevertheless creates a narrative of authentic nationhood, which has been a significant part of the recognition campaign. In particular, the assertion that Somaliland people lived in the territory before 1960 is an explicit framing of Somaliland as a 'successor state', suggesting that it has legitimacy and longevity. As Dorman, Hammett and Nugent note about similar cases, 'the defence of national boundaries is predicated upon a claim to historical legitimacy' (2007:13). The genealogical claim of Somaliland's citizenship law contributes to this legitimacy making. Josep Llobera writes that 'genealogies are a form of memory which helps the understanding of the lines of rupture and correspondence' (cited in Bestard-Camps, 1991:xiv). I argued in

¹⁷ For an announcement of the Order in the *London Gazette*, 18 May 1934, see <<http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/34051/pages/3194/page.pdf>>, accessed 30 January 2014. The British Protectorates, Protected States and Protected Persons Order 1949/140 specifically listed the Somaliland Protectorate.

¹⁸ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the importance of authentic lineages to the genealogical idiom, and its attendant exclusions.

Chapter 3 that the genealogical idiom contains a particular form of temporality, which has become, in some sense, woven into Somaliland's national biography.¹⁹

Clan Citizenship

The emphasis on descent as the key marker of Somaliland citizenship also roots 'official' identity in clan identity. Sharif, a senior civil servant at the Ministry of Education, argued that this makes clan the basis of national identity:

The thing about the citizenship law is that to be a Somalilander means you are not born *in* it, but born *to* it. You have to be born to the clan – it is citizenship by association. (Interview, 2014)

As I argued in Chapter 3, in many key aspects of people's ordinary lives, clan institutions and relations provide more meaningful engagement than the state, making the status of citizen seem to be less significant than clan identity in terms of accessing welfare and protection. Somaliland's unrecognised *de jure* status also, of course, contributes to making the citizen-state relationship contingent: clan membership is predictable regardless of which state one lives in. A prominent civil society leader in her fifties, Nasteho, told me that 'the question of citizenship is a very fake one here' (Interview, 2012). She contrasted the lack of rights under the Barre regime with the insubstantial rights under the Somaliland state. 'There are rights and obligations. But the question here is [are] people aware of these rights? Is the government doing enough to provide those to the general, ordinary person? No' (ibid). Asad, the old SNM officer and former minister, echoed this, when he told me 'These rights [in the constitution] you get on a personal basis, but you better say that you should get it on the clan basis. [...] At this stage of development that we are now in, you could hardly see a citizen getting his own rights, as a taxpayer or whatever. But you always have that shaded by the clan, by the tribe' (Interview, 2012). It is for these reasons that people talk about 'clan citizenship' in Somaliland: for justice, welfare and security, citizenship is mediated via the clan, with clan leaders as key 'convertors' of identity. Descent is not just the basis of legal status; it also determines the nature of the relationship between citizen and state.

This is important because the use of lineage as the basic structuring element of the citizenship regime brings with it differentiations in status based in traditional norms. Children born out of wedlock (*garacyo*) are granted formal legal status under the 2002 citizenship law. It is notable, however, that whilst a foundling child born in Somaliland may receive citizenship under Article 11, a child born to a Somaliland woman but without a named father may only be granted citizenship via naturalisation (Article 4.2) – the same regulations governing aliens and refugees (Republic of Somaliland, 2002; SomalilandLaw.com, 2014). This rule arises from the distinctions made between male and female citizenship. According to Article 2.3, 'Anyone born to a male Somaliland citizen may

¹⁹ On the role of identity and time in national storytelling, see Bhabha, 1990; and Berenskoetter, 2014.

acquire Somaliland citizenship, even if s/he is resident, refugee or citizen of another country' (Republic of Somaliland, 2002). In other words, a child born to a Somaliland woman is not automatically granted citizenship.²⁰ The emphasis on paternal lineage and citizenship comes from the heavily patriarchal nature of traditional Somaliland society, in which genealogy is traced via the father, and the father's kin pays the *mag*. This genealogical citizenship is not legible via the mother. Women's formal citizenship status is subject to sexist proscriptions that connect their ability to make claims to their intimate relations – whom they marry and whom they beget – yet it is only through the act of giving birth that the clan gains materiality. The 2002 law made an explicit distinction between male and female citizens, with women losing Somaliland citizenship if they marry a foreigner (Article 13.3) even though Article 2.2 permits dual citizenship. The source of this is variably explained in terms of Somaliland culture and Islam, in that women are understood to join the family of their husband upon marriage and to leave the family of their father, hence Somaliland male citizens may freely marry foreign women without forfeiting their citizenship. The overt gender inequality of the law is recognised as problematic by members of Somaliland's civil society, particularly women's rights advocates. Two of Hargeysa's most prominent lawyers, who I interviewed at length on the regime of citizenship in Somaliland, both reasoned that it could not have been drafted differently in the context of Somaliland culture (Shermarke, interview, 2013; Shire, interview, 2012). Though they might be on an equal legal footing, in practice women's status is circumscribed by the genealogical idiom.

This idea of the 'clan-citizen' reflects a predominant narrative in which the authentic citizen (and thus, perhaps, the 'good' citizen) is someone who has genealogical heritage and can be situated within frameworks of clan identity. There are of course other 'norms' of citizenship in Somaliland: the Gabooye and *garacyo* that I discussed in Chapter 3 suffer a form of 'graduated' or second-class citizenship; whilst amongst my diaspora interlocutors there was an overriding idea that they should be taken on their own terms, perhaps as the citizen individuals of Western liberal theory (see Chapter 6). These show the multiplicity of the discourses around belonging in Somaliland. The emergence of credible official documentation may contribute to bolstering this narrative of citizenship further amongst some groups in Somaliland, since ID cards can, as I noted in Chapter 2, produce civic subjectivity. However, as I note throughout this and the following chapters, the close connection of Somaliland's current ID cards with genealogical verification may reinforce the ideas of 'clan citizenship' that I have discussed here.

²⁰ Where the father is unknown or the child is orphaned, a person may apply for citizenship according to Articles 10.1 and 11. This is to cover the position of those born out of wedlock who in most cases do not have a paternal lineage connecting them to clan genealogies (as discussed in Chapter 4). Gender discrimination in citizenship law, particularly in terms of marriage, is common to a number of African states (Manby, 2009; 2014; see also Dorman, 2014).

Hard and Soft Borders

As well as determining internal boundaries, genealogical logic also shapes ideas of national belonging and border-making. The legal and symbolic force of both descent and residence in the constitution underscores the ways in which the Hawiye and Darood clans of eastern and southern Somalia are not part of Somaliland: a clear rebuttal of prospects for reunification, and a conceptual encirclement of the ‘northern tribes’ that had formerly lived under the Protectorate and whose descendants now constituted Somaliland’s citizens.

Renders and Terlinden argue that ‘the boundaries of statehood are the key object of [Somaliland’s] negotiations: on what terms and to what extent are clan segments willing to “belong” to the fledgling state?’ (2010:725) All of the major clan-families in Somaliland have populations beyond the national borders: the Dir (Issa) in Djibouti, the Darood (Warsengeli and Dhulbahante) in southern and eastern Somalia, and the Isaaq in the Haud and the Ogaden (Ethiopia’s Region V). Tracing citizenship through descent, as the constitution and the 2002 law state, means that many more Somalis claim Somaliland citizenship than reside in the territory, making the ‘mental map’ of Somaliland much larger than the territorial extent. In this sense, some people regard Somaliland’s boundaries as extending beyond its territorial circumscription to ‘the point at which something becomes something else, at which the way things are done changes, at which “we” end and “they” begin’ (Migdal, 2004:5). A territorial conception of citizenship (*jus soli*) would not have covered the broad ‘mental map’ of Somaliland belonging. As well as the substantial diaspora population, nomadic pastoralists and other semi-permanent residents criss-crossing the Ethiopian and Djibouti border demand the rights of citizenship, not least those of the voter (see Chapter 5). At the same time, people in the frontier zone between Somaliland and Puntland are embraced on both sides and yet also marginalised and peripheral, meaning the mental map is more constrained than the territorial demarcation claimed by Somaliland.²¹

At the convention at Burco in May 1991, the SNM and the participating clan elders declared an independent state of Somaliland within the old colonial borders – a rhetorical return to the nomenclature of the former British Protectorate, and evocative of the historical precedent for both its identity and extent. A fundamental element of Somaliland’s claim to statehood is this assertion of historical and territorial continuity. However, Somaliland neither ‘inherited’ nor established boundaries protected by international law (Renders and Terlinden, 2010:725). Whilst Migdal (2004) argues that the time of seeing borders as ‘immutably rock-like’ has changed since the end of the Cold War, for Somaliland international borders are ‘rock-like’ since they are regarded in a legal sense as extending not to the former Protectorate borders as the Somaliland state claims, but as reaching down as

²¹ Having asserted the resumption of the old Protectorate borders, the new Somaliland state claims to extend to the east of Laascaanood in the region of Sool and almost to Boosaaso in the autonomous republic of Puntland that lies to the east up to Cape Gardafui, the nib of the Horn’s triangular coastline (see Map 1). Puntland, established in 1998 as a *primus inter pares* state of a future Somali federation, claims, on the other hand, to extend deep into Sanaag and Sool, past Laasqorey on the northern coast and Buuhoodle on the Ethiopian border to wherever members of the Harti clan (who constitute many Puntlanders) live.

far as Kismaayo to the south and Cape Gardafui in the east, tracing those of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

At the same time, these boundaries are negotiable and contested. Migdal writes that '[b]orders shift; they leak; and they hold varying sorts of meaning for different people' (2004:5). This 'leakiness' is particularly apparent along the Somaliland-Ethiopian border across which nomadic citizens move. The question of whether to include the nomadic population under the terms of citizenship is an intensely political one, and demonstrates the power of the genealogical idiom to be at once circumscriptive and widely encompassing. 'Those within [Somaliland] say that those beyond the border are not Somalilanders, but those who have nomadic populations argue that they must be included', Sharif, a senior civil servant, explained (Interview, 2014). Rooble, my research assistant in 2014, told me that the issue was very complex because of the dispersal of people with Somaliland lineage; that at the time of the citizenship law, people were arguing that everyone should be included because 'there has been a war and people are stuck. We cannot punish them' (Interview, 2014a). Similarly, Asad argued that: 'The Isaaqs decided in 1991 that all Region V people were Somalilanders. Those at the boundaries are disadvantaged. The Dhulbahante said, "Are we going to call all the Harti to come then?"' (Interview, 2013a) The issue of whose nomadic populations would be included was thus a further divisive factor between the east, west and central clans of Somaliland. The dominance of the central clans (the Isaaq) in Somaliland's political fortunes means that their demand to include Region V Somalis (who can trace their descent to the pre-1960 clans) within the Somaliland citizenry carries greater political and practical weight than similar claims made by the Dir (Issa) in the west²² and the Darood in the east.²³

Natural Citizens, Natural Strangers

Although the independent state of Somaliland was declared within the old colonial borders, a territorial conception of citizenship (*jus soli*) would not have covered the broad 'mental map' of Somaliland belonging. Migdal has described such boundaries as 'the point at which

²² The Protectorate's western border was determined by an Anglo-French agreement in 1888, declaring a border between Djibouti and Seylac, the respective ports of the French and British domains. Since Britain's protection treaty with the Issa, like with the other Somaliland clans, had been only for protection, Britain had no claim to the Issa's traditional lands on the other side of the border (Lewis, 2002:49), and thus was unable to bargain for the coherence of the Issa lands. The splitting of the Issa clan of the Dir clan-family over the Djibouti-Somaliland border is a particular source of contention at election time when members of the Issa clan on the Djibouti side cross to vote in Issa-dominated areas of Somaliland; and vocalise political claims about self-governance in the region.

²³ The eastern boundary of Somaliland was claimed on the grounds of the Protectorate borders as agreed by an 1888 Anglo-Italian agreement, which ran through the traditional territory of the Majerteen, a sub-clan of the Darod that contains also the Warsengeli and Dhulbahante. The present boundary is challenged by the Puntland State of Somalia (see Map 1), producing essentially a cold war between authorities on both sides, which occasionally breaks out into bloody conflict. In recent years, political and armed confrontation has made the frontier zone increasingly militarised and more sharply defined. Not only Puntland and Somaliland authorities lay claim to the land and the populations residing here, but Dhulbahante and Warsengeli groups have begun to articulate their own political futures. Conflict in the Golis Mountains and at Taleex, Buhoodle and Laascanood since the mid-2000s has brought the Somaliland and Puntland armies and local clan militias into direct armed conflict, claiming hundreds of lives and wrecking the tolerable ambiguity that had permitted people living in these areas to conduct their daily lives. See Hoehne, 2015 for more on this.

something becomes something else at which the way things are done changes, at which “we” end and “they” begin’ (2004:5). The ‘we’ in Somaliland includes in effect, everyone from the Isaaq (Habar Awal, Habar Jaalo, Habar Yoonis, Garhajis and Arap), Issa, and Gadabuursi clans, as well as the Gabooye, since all these clans were resident in Somaliland at the time of independence (see Figure 1). As well as the broad dispersal of people via the diaspora and migration, the transhumance of Somaliland’s nomadic pastoralists brings them seasonally within and beyond the borders, also making a territorially described state undesirable.²⁴ ‘Those within [Somaliland] say that those beyond the border are not Somalilanders, but those who have nomadic populations argue that they must be included’, Sharif explained (Interview, 2014). Rooble told me that at the time of the citizenship law, people were arguing that everyone should be included because ‘there has been a war and people are stuck. We cannot punish them’ (Interview, 2014a). Similarly, Asad argued that: ‘The Isaacs decided in 1991 that all Region V people were Somalilanders. Those at the boundaries are disadvantaged. The Dhulbahante said, “Are we going to call all the Harti to come then?”’ (Interview, 2013a) The issue of whose nomadic populations would be included was a further divisive factor between the east, west and central clans of Somaliland for the genealogical citizenship does not conceptually encircle the broader kin of the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli clans that live in the contested frontier zone with Puntland – rather they are included because of the territorial claims that the Somaliland state makes to the old Protectorate border.²⁵ The Warsengeli and Dhulbahante therefore make a *jus soli* claim to Somaliland and *jus sanguinis* claim to Puntland, thus complicating the citizenship regime and codifying a trigger for conflict in the borderlands.²⁶

The expansive regime of Somaliland citizenship as covering all descendants of pre-1960 residents makes for a flexible and broad conception of nationhood. Asad argued that he thought that:

The majority of the people believe in the fact that they are Somalilanders, that they are Ethiopians. So that’s the new concept of Somaliland. You see? Somalia is for Somalia, Djibouti is for the Djiboutians, Puntland is for the Puntland. *This* [gesturing] is for Somaliland. (Interview, 2013a)

Here Asad invokes notions of soft and hard boundaries: Somaliland is for Somalilanders (and Somali Ethiopians). Even though Asad speaks in terms of territorial units (Somalia, Djibouti), he is working here with the supra-territorial notion of citizenship by descent

²⁴ In the original Somali text, the phrase about residence uses the word ‘deggenaa’, derived from the verb ‘deg’, which means dwelling, settling or camping in a place – permitting, in other words, nomadic conceptions of ‘residence’. Related is the word ‘degaan’ that refers to a clan’s homeland (Hoehne, 2015).

²⁵ Hoehne argues that when Puntland was declared, the clans that straddled the border orientated eastwards, drawn by the idea of *Hartinimo* (Harti-ness) on which Puntland was founded, which embraced the Warsengeli and Dhulbahante genealogically and ideologically (2015:56). Menkhaus similarly argues that Puntland is a ‘clanustan’ explicitly drawn along Harti clan lines (2006:83).

²⁶ In recent years, political, and later armed, confrontation has made the frontier zone increasingly militarised and more sharply defined. Not only Puntland and Somaliland authorities lay claim to the land and the populations residing here, but Dhulbahante and Warsengeli groups have begun to articulate their own political futures. Conflict in the Golis Mountains and at Taleex, Buhoodle and Laascanood since the mid-2000s has brought the Somaliland and Puntland armies and local clan militias into direct armed conflict, claiming hundreds of lives and wrecking the tolerable ambiguity that had permitted people living in these areas to conduct their daily lives.

whereby nomadic people are trans-nationals, moving freely over the leaky Somaliland-Ethiopia border. This also draws on the deeper narrative of nationality as ethnicity that characterised the pan-Somali and socialist citizenship regimes that I discussed above, and which is at some level still operant. For instance, Omar, a director of an NGO in Hargeysa, made the following, seemingly paradoxical, statement: ‘I am a Somaliland citizen, a Somali citizen, Ethiopian citizen. ... If you speak Somali, [you] are Somali – you don’t need citizenship’ (Interview, 2012). On the other hand, though the border might be poorly demarcated and functionally porous, conceptually it is a ‘hard’ boundary because it marks the separation between ‘Somalilanders’ and non-Somalilanders.

The 2002 law includes the possibility of acquisition of citizenship by law (naturalisation): ‘a person who had Somaliland citizenship conferred on him lawfully’. However, the wording of Article 4.1, to which this refers, is an exercise in wishful thinking. A person must have been a ‘lawful’ resident for an interrupted decade (thus excluding IDPs, whose legal status is ambivalent at best), be known for ‘good character and behaviour’, must not have ‘participated in activities which were contrary to the sovereignty of Somaliland’ (both surely open to interpretation), and have been a taxpayer the entire period of their residence (even though taxpaying in general is sporadic). The conditions are so onerous that no one I met in my fieldwork ever confessed to knowing a naturalised citizen of Somaliland. Some people claimed to have heard that so-and-so from Ethiopia (i.e. a Region V Somali) had obtained citizenship, but most conceded that the only verifiable case was John Drysdale, the former protectorate officer and writer who had lived near Hargeysa almost continuously since independence, and who had been made an honorary citizen (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2012–14). Unsurprisingly given the state of Somaliland’s statistical and record-keeping capacities, there appeared to be no publicly available figures on numbers of naturalised citizens; and the Ministry of Interior and Department of Immigration evaded my questions about how many people had met the criteria, filed an application or been awarded citizenship.

This is revealing of the centrality of authenticity to Somaliland citizenship. ‘Natural’ citizens are those that can make a claim to descent within specific genealogical-territorial boundaries. The notion of naturalising non-Somali kinsmen – i.e. making them ‘natural’ members of the Somaliland nation – is obviously at odds with this blood-based citizenship. Rather, citizens of Somalia (including Puntland), refugees and IDPs, and migrants from Ethiopia are natural outsiders to the Somaliland nation. Over the course of my fieldwork, I encountered strong attitudes against immigrants in Hargeysa as part of a broader narrative of encroachment and vulnerability associated with elusive recognition. People spoke of their fear that the ‘Oromo’ (often shorthand for a range of immigrants) and ‘Xabarshi’ (a derogatory term for Tikrit people) would ‘overtake’ Somalis: ‘they can change this people if they increase their numbers’, argued Muxudin, a journalist I met at the Maan-Soor Hotel (Interview, 2014). ‘We are so small, if Ethiopia sends us 100,000 people a year, it will change the Somaliland demographics’, lamented Ismaaciil, a senior staff member at an

INGO (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). This apprehension was connected to economic uncertainty, with tropes familiar from immigration debates in other parts of the world, not least that the Oromo were ‘taking all the jobs’. ‘They send us poor and blind people, but we are poor’ added Ismaaciil (ibid). ‘They are doing small work in the land, taking rubbish. They are coming every day. If they walk [across the border], they are sent back, but some people put them in the [trunks of] cars for money. It’s like *tahrib*’, continued Muxudin (ibid).²⁷ ‘They start off polishing shoes, then they do cars’, Ashkir told me. ‘They come here to do begging and they send it back’ (Interview, 2014a).

Since the 1990s, the Somaliland government has periodically rounded up non-Somali Ethiopians and deported them back across the border, often for security reasons (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2013–14).²⁸ Although many of these individuals are categorised as illegal immigrants, in fact their status is often ambiguous: some have resident permits or are registered as foreign employees, others are asylum seekers and refugees, but may be without documentation as registration was paused between October 2008 (in the aftermath of the Hargeysa bombings) and 2012 (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Some of these Ethiopians, often Oromo escaping persecution, have lived in Somaliland for many years, if not decades, and thus may have become acclimatised to living in the IDP camps and other settlements around Hargeysa where they are usually based. The accent test, long used as a marker of origin, seems to be becoming a less certain method of identification as long-term IDPs and migrants are allegedly learning Somali with the ‘northern’ accent, and thus circumventing this informal yet widely used check. ‘They know Somali, they were born here, they look like us, so you can’t [differentiate]’, Asli told me. ‘I am not trying to be racist or anything like that but people should know the difference between Somaliland people, and Ethiopians and Oromo, and Somali Xamar [Mogadishu] – we should differentiate between them’ (Interview, 2014). ‘We just don’t know who’s who’, echoed Ashkir (Interview, 2014a).

We see here therefore an effort to insist on the meaningful of boundaries, and indeed hard borders in Somaliland. The production of Somaliland’s borders (and boundary making more generally) is crucial to the socio-political spatiality of Somaliland’s present polity. Shifting borders have created zones of inclusion and exclusion that have contributed to defining the concepts of belonging and authenticity that undergird Somaliland’s contemporary citizenship regime. The desire to circumscribe interlopers and strangers – to make clear who’s who – is a strong driver of the national ID card scheme initiated in 2014 that I discuss in Chapter 6. Although the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs does issue permits to work for foreign migrants, the national ID card is the most comprehensive effort to date to create

²⁷ *Tahrib* is the illegal migration and human trafficking that moves people out of Somaliland, such as by land to Libya or Tunisia and on to Europe.

²⁸ In 2011, it was reported that the Somaliland government was seeking the departure of an estimated 80,000 illegal immigrants, mostly from Ethiopia, who would be deported if they did not leave of their own accord (IRIN, 2011). Subsequent deportations have not been of such a great scale, but nonetheless remain frequent, for instance, 42 reported to be deported in August 2014, allegedly to prevent *tahrib* to Libya (Somaliland Press, 2014); 190 in July 2015, allegedly because they suffered from contagious diseases (Somaliland Informer, 2015); and 780 in January 2016 (Somaliland Nation News, 2016).

official documentation that distinguishes Somaliland nationals from other individuals within the state. Without variations of official documentation, however – for instance, residents’ cards – non-citizens will remain distinguishable by their lack of paperwork – a form of invisibility that highlights the limits of the Somaliland state’s ability to make its population legible.

Proving Identity

I have argued so far in this chapter that Somaliland citizens were variously and repeatedly interpellated by both clan and state institutions in the decades prior to Somaliland’s declaration of independence. After 1991, a more symbiotic relationship appeared to emerge in which clan identity and lineage was informally and then officially incorporated as the basis of official identity: Somaliland citizens are Somaliland clan members, and vice versa.

In the years since independence, the Somaliland state has instituted a range of formal identity documents that are based on individual identity and eligibility. However, the verification dilemma has remained since the state has very few records on individual applicants and no comprehensive way to ascertain unique identity. In order to fill the gap in the chain of verification, and thus to try to meet the challenge of inclusion, different Somaliland institutions incorporate vouching by caaqils, the vernacular verification that I described in Chapter 3. Caaqils are called upon by officials of the state, most often at the Ministry of Interior but also by the National Electoral Commission, to authenticate applicants for identity documents. Their role as a guarantor of identity is codified in law and frequent in practice. In each of these projects of identification, we find therefore a form of syncretic adaptation, whereby the functional and procedural gaps are plugged by the incorporation of ‘traditional’ forms.

Citizenship Certificates

The dependence of official procedures upon the ‘metic’ legibility of societal actors is most noticeable in certificates of citizenship, a legislative requirement under the 2002 citizenship law (discussed above). These certificates are supposed to act as a form of ‘breeder’ document, verifying a person’s nationality so that they can apply for further documentation such as a passport; indeed, they appear to be mostly used for passport applications, and thus do not have wider currency.²⁹ As a breeder document, it is assumed that applicants do not have an existing form of official documentation, and therefore the codified procedure is for self-declaration or testimony by their caaqil:

²⁹ I could not access publicly available figures about the number of certificates that have been issued, but it is significant that rather than roll out this system on a national basis, the government has decided to create a new national ID card – a development that I analyse in Chapter 6.

The confirmation of proof of Somaliland citizenship may be obtained by an individual on the production of:

- a) A declaration relating to the individual made at a court by the Ministry of Internal Affairs registered Akil (clan chief) of the individual's community.
- b) The form designed for the purpose by the Citizenship Office and signed by the individual. (Republic of Somaliland, 2002: Article 3)

The Somaliland government has therefore institutionalised the use of caaqils as guarantors in its procedures for state identity documents. The Ministry of Interior (formerly, the Ministry of Internal Affairs) has registered over 900 *suldaans* and caaqils, many of whom are paid a retainer or fee for assisting with conflict resolution and security matters, as well as supporting bureaucratic processes relating to citizenship and migration (Abdullahi, interview, 2013; MoNPD, 2011:181). Caaqils are therefore required to testify in court that a person belongs to their *mag*-paying group. When they cannot appear in person, the applicant may submit a form: this, however, is essentially a letter that contains the citizen's name, birthdate, place of birth, and is still connected to their caaqil, whose name must also be given in order to guarantee that the person is a member of their sub-clan (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2012–13).

The Ministry of Interior therefore uses caaqils as guarantors in the place of existing paperwork or more technical modes of identification, such as biometric verification. A senior official at the ministry explained to me that they must rely on the caaqils in the absence of centralised documentation, stating that 'the caaqil system lasts because they can do the traditional counting from A to Z' (Abdullahi, interview, 2013). Caaqils, in other words, can place applicants genealogically in the web of clan lineages, and by doing so can affirm whether he or she is a member of a Somaliland clan. This therefore is not simply verification of applicants' biographical details, but a statement about their authenticity as a Somalilander. In effect, therefore, whilst the use of caaqils in the production of citizenship certificates might be explained in terms of pragmatism – they have knowledge of key segments of the population, and can authoritatively verify them, whilst the Ministry cannot – my argument is that there is a deeper vein of authentication at work here that reinforces a particular conception of citizenship in Somaliland.

Municipal IDs

The citizenship certificate is a national document of practical value only for those Somalilanders who need to prove their citizenship, most typically in the application for a passport. Since few people have the means or need to obtain a passport (discussed below), more local forms of documentation are more common in Hargeysa: the *tessera* and driver's license.

The Hargeysa local council produces a municipal ID (often called a *tessera* [Italian for card]) as part of the 'family sheet' system that records the name and number of people

within a family.³⁰ City residents can apply for a simple plastic card that carries their name, mother's name, place and date of birth, photograph, and the mayor's signature. Dagal, a senior civil servant working at the municipality, claimed that over 17,000 municipal ID cards had been issued when I interviewed him in 2014 (Interview, 2014a).³¹ Although technically the ID is only a confirmation of residence, useful for school enrolment and other similar administrative processes, Dagal declared that the municipal ID was to 'state that you are a citizen', and that it was the 'same as the UK system' (Interview, 2014b; translated by Abdiweli). This therefore shows the degree of overlap and lack of specificity of the various intersecting forms of documentation, and the desire amongst some for an ID that acts as a 'symbol of statehood' (a theme I address in Chapter 6). As with the certificate of citizenship, the caaqil is required for the corroboration of identity since applicants typically do not have any other form of documentation. As with the Ministry of Interior official, Dagal argued that the municipality used caaqils because 'he knows his people' (ibid). Again, therefore, we see how state institutions must 'see' citizens through the metic legibility of certain intermediaries, who enjoy proximity and knowledge.

Birth and Death Certificates

As I explained in Chapter 2, civil registers are repositories of information about a population's vital events (birth, death, marriage, divorce), creating databanks of national statistics, and producing certificates that evidence these changes in identity and population size. To date, however, Somaliland has not had a comprehensive or systematic capability to produce vital statistics to inform the development and functioning of key social services, not least the health sector, as well as broader economic planning. This is a function of its under-developed, under-funded and constrained administrative infrastructure.³² Whilst the British commissioner had introduced regulations for the registration of births and deaths in 1904,³³ this did not lead to the development of a statewide civil register infrastructure in the postcolonial period. A comprehensive system had not subsequently been built, meaning there is no national civil register in Somaliland.

³⁰ Since I limited my fieldwork to Hargeysa, this section presents only information gathered about the registration and production of the family sheet and *tessera* in the Hargeysa municipality. Further research can explore whether and to what extent these services are provided by other municipalities in Somaliland.

³¹ Creative Associates (2013) reported that the Hargeysa municipal ID cost S\$20 and that other municipalities were not producing similar documents.

³² The Central Statistics Department (CSD) responsible for national statistics has only been able to collect modest enumerative data. The CSD itself has stated that the level of qualifications and statistical knowledge of its staff is insufficient; and that the infrastructure and personnel for nationwide surveying is not available (CSD, 2013:16). Although a May 2008 presidential decree established planning and statistical units at national, regional and district government level, a 2012 survey found that most of these only existed on paper (ibid:18). An annual booklet, 'Somaliland in Figures', containing official statistical data on social activities and economic sectors (MoNPD, 2003–2013), draws on administrative records from ministries and agencies, but in many cases is in fact estimated or extrapolated from pre-war statistics. Official figures for population growth, birth and death rate, and urban/rural residence in Somaliland have therefore remained unchanged largely since 2003, despite evidence, for instance, that environmental changes are diminishing opportunities for pastoralist life, altering the urban/rural balance (Gitonga et al, 2013).

³³ According to Births and Deaths Registration Regulations, 1904, registration was for all children born alive after the regulations, and compulsory if either one or both parents were of European or American origin or descent. Fathers of illegitimate children were not bound to register as such, in keeping with Somaliland custom. Similarly all deaths were to be reported to the respective district officer, which were to be noted in a record book provided by a newly appointed registrar. The particulars noted in the civil register included the name, sex, date of birth and nationality.

In lieu of a national register, the Hargeysa municipality produces a document known as the ‘family sheet’, which records the names and birthdates of parents and their children. On the one hand, it is a poor substitute for a civil register since it is only used to record relationships, and not to generate vital statistics. On the other hand, it can lead to the creation of an ID card, so in this sense may be seen as ‘foundational’ (Gelb and Clark, 2013). In addition, the Hargeysa municipality does produce certificates of birth for the price of 60,000 shillings (approximately \$10), drawn from the family sheet (Dagaal, interview, 2014a; Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). However, very few people appear to have a birth certificate. I was told that the municipality had issued around 28,500 certificates by August 2014 (Dagaal, interview, 2014a): this is a small proportion of the capital’s estimated 1 million-strong population, meaning many parents do not register birth either because they are unwilling or unable. Indeed, very few births take place in hospital (which exist in only a few urban areas), and because people prefer for traditional birth practices over Western medicine (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2013). Even where births do take place in a hospital, there is no standard provision for registration at the time of birth: most new parents receive a receipt for the fee paid for the natal care, and this acts as a form of birth record (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). The low number of birth certificates produced in Hargeysa may also be because adults, like the civil servant Qasim I cited above, have not replaced the ones lost or stolen during the war. Significantly, birth registration is voluntary and since birth certificates do not appear to be compulsory for any other type of ID, as I explained above, they do not fulfil a ‘breeder’ function.

There is also no national death registration in Somaliland. Islamic burials happen relatively quickly, and bodies go directly into the care of relatives without the intervention of mortuaries, meaning there is no access point for data collection. Moreover, I was told that the idea of recording the death is uncomfortable and a sensitive matter that does not fit with how things are traditionally done in Somaliland (Ifrax, interview, 2014). Ugbaad, an opposition politician, argued that there was no need for death registration: if Jamaac dies, ‘we all know that there is no more Jamaac’ (ibid). ‘For what reason would you want to register death? He’s dead!’ (Ugbaad, interview, 2014) This cultural impediment is matched by institutional weakness in the provision of official channels for data collection.³⁴

Significantly, Ugbaad’s exclamation also points to another factor: the role of genealogical knowledge, held by every Somalilander who learns their lineage by heart and draws on clan connections and relations in everyday life.³⁵ By orally recording births and deaths, these shared genealogies constitute a sort of ‘civil register’,³⁶ which works in personal and social contexts to commemorate vital events. As Ugbaad claimed, ‘we all know’. And yet without

³⁴ See Rao et al, 2004 on the problems of death registration in sub-Saharan Africa.

³⁵ I discuss the significance of genealogy for everyday identification and vouching in Chapter 3.

³⁶ In Somali culture, women do not change their names at marriage, and so I have not discussed the issue of marriage certificates, since this does not pertain directly to the matters of identification and verification.

civil registration, the state does not know. This is one of the motivations therefore for the new national ID card that I explain below and in Chapter 6.

Driver's Licenses

For a long time the driver's license in Somaliland consisted of a registration book that belonged, as it were, to the car: when the car was sold on, the document went with it (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). Inside the small booklet were pages for each owner, giving their name and photograph. Primarily, this was therefore to prove ownership, rather than to identify someone. In 2013, the Ministry for Public Works announced that it was upgrading driver's licenses to the plastic card familiar in other countries. Emblazoned with the Somaliland flag, this would indicate the driver's name, date of birth, the date and place of issue, expiry date, the type of license (car, motorcycle or truck) and the license number, and be of the 'European-style' said the director-general at the time (Muse, interview, 2014).

The motivation behind the new card is not primarily identification. Rather its rationale has been framed in three ways (Muse, interview, 2013). Firstly, to prevent counterfeit and fraud, and therefore the new card is made of sturdy plastic, and carries a hologram and an official stamp (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). Secondly, to try to better regulate drivers: Somaliland has an extremely high fatality rate from motorised vehicles, with staff at Hargeysa's hospital saying that they receive an average of 15–20 victims of road traffic accidents a day, in part because of poor road quality and car repair, but also because of unlicensed drivers (IRIN, 2012; Somaliland Sun, 2014b). A third reason appears to be to try to raise income: less than 40 per cent of registered car owners paid the road levy in 2010, whilst only around 17 per cent paid their annual registration fee (Balthasar, 2012:237). A new ID not only brings drivers back into the Ministry of Public Works' purview to enforce taxpaying but represents a substantial revenue stream: with the new license costing over 200,000 shillings (around \$46), the ministry could expect an estimated revenue of over \$2.6 million in the first three years should all drivers take up the new license, followed by \$800,000 every three years from renewal fees.³⁷

The new driver's license requires identity verification – a provision not needed when it was connected to car ownership – which, at the time of writing, was limited to the municipal ID described above, and a certificate from the Hargeysa Group Hospital, stating their blood type and their eyesight quality (Calas, interview, 2014).³⁸ However, as I have noted above,

³⁷ These calculations are based on figures obtained from Calas, a senior civil servant at the Ministry of Public Works, who told me there were 26,000 light driving licenses to be registered at 276,500.35 shillings (around \$46) each, and 24,000 heavy driving licenses at 360,000 shillings (around \$60). Renewal fees were to be 100,000 shillings (approximately \$16.5) (Interview, 2014; Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). The new cards are allegedly being created by a commercial firm in a public-private partnership, although the senior official at the Ministry of Public Works was reluctant to tell me its name or the details of this deal (Muse, interview, 2014).

³⁸ Muse, a senior official at the Ministry of Interior, told me in 2014 that the expectation was that the new national ID card (described in Chapter 6) could be used for identification (Interview, 2014). Caaqil authentication would continue to meet the verification problem in the meantime – or perhaps perpetually.

although Hargeysa residents may access the *tessera*, many people do not have it. When I pressed the civil servant responsible for the new driver's license about its ID requirements, he admitted that 'people often come with no ID and they argue and say, "I am a Somalilander"' (Calas, interview, 2014; translated by Abdiweli). For this reason, caaqil authentication is also accepted. 'We depend on the clan. We have to accept it. But he will sign and take responsibility, so any wrong information will be on his head', added Calas (ibid). Here we see the way that formalised ID is backed up by the caaqil's personal vouch, given meaning by the clan system. Vernacular verification thus constitutes a practical stopgap to overcome the 'verification problem' faced by the Ministry of Public Works. Significantly, it also works to reinforce the importance of clan membership and genealogical situatedness, in that the bearers of these licenses are not simply accredited drivers, but also authenticated Somalilanders. Even drivers' licenses thus become artefacts of Somaliland's 'stateness', and contribute to embedding the importance of clan and genealogy into official structures, institutions, and processes.

Passports

Caaqil authentication is also used in the application process for a Somaliland passport. Officially, there has been a passport in Somaliland since 1996, a year after the establishment of the Department of Immigration (Dayib, interview, 2014). The motivation for the passport was as a mark of statehood and differentiation from Somalia: 'it is a requirement for an independent country to have a passport', said Nur, a senior immigration official (Interview, 2014). Of course without recognition, it is formally accepted as an international travel document in only a few countries, principally Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya.³⁹ As I described above, people have long been able to cross the land borders with Ethiopia and Djibouti without formal paperwork. 'We used accent, region, clan address', said Nur (Interview, 2014), forms of situatedness that I explored in Chapter 3. Saadaq, a man in his twenties now working as a taxi driver, summed it up thus: 'At Wajaale, the police say "just talk"' (Interview, 2014) in order to check for a northern Somali accent (see Chapter 3). Increasingly, the emphasis has been on more formal procedures, however, primarily driven by security demands in the face of Al-Shabaab terrorism. For those who require a Somaliland passport, they must visit the passport office that squats at the back of the Department of Immigration in central Hargeysa. When I visited in the spring of 2013, access to the office was along an overgrown path running along the side of the department building. The office itself was a large, dark, bare room, containing a couple of computers; the back wall was lined by filing cabinets in which, according to the senior immigration official there, the paper records of some 11,000 applicants were stored (Dayib, interview, 2014).

³⁹ The Somaliland Mission to the UK (nd) says that the passport is accepted in 11 countries. The news outlet Medeshi Valley reported eight countries as accepting the Somaliland passport for entry (Ali, 2013). It is reported anecdotally and officially that the passport has been accepted in the UK, Belgium, France, South Sudan and Indonesia, although this sometimes must be accompanied by additional documentation. For travel beyond these countries, Somalis in Somaliland typically travel to Garowe, the capital of the Puntland state of Somalia, to obtain a Federal Republic of Somalia passport.

The passport application is relatively straightforward, consisting of a completed application form, passport-sized photographs, and letters from the Criminal Investigation Bureau and the Attorney General confirming that the applicant does not have a criminal record. In terms of identity verification, since at least 2012, the applicant has also been told to bring their old 2010 voter registration card (discussed at length in Chapter 5), elevating it to the principal form of validating ID. Of course, this carries with it the assumption that all eligible passport applicants will also have been voters at the time of the 2010 presidential election. For those who were not of age in 2010 or did not obtain a voter ID card, their identity must be verified in another way. This may be a municipality ID card (described above), an existing record in the Immigration Department's files, or evidence of an account with the Bank of Somaliland, Dahabshiil or Salaam Bank (Dayib, interview, 2014). Importantly, however, *caaqil* authentication is also required: the passport application form explicitly requires the name of the *caaqil* and his telephone number so that he can verify the applicant's identity.

Saahid, a journalist I met in 2014, related how when he applied for a passport, the officer asked him what his clan, *caaqil* and *suldaan*'s names were. He said 'I realised my clan name is Somalilander!' Whilst he wanted to be identified as a national, not a clan member, the officers insisted on knowing his *caaqil*'s name; when he gave it, they responded, 'we know you well now' (Interview, 2014). Saahid explained that he realised that 'the biggest identity I have is my *caaqil*' (ibid). It is through the *caaqil*'s endorsement that Saahid's identity was authenticated – he was assured to be not only Saahid, but also a member of his clan and thus a Somalilander. Significantly, the *caaqil* 'converted' Saahid's identity into an 'official identity' that could then be read by the state in its identification procedures. It is thus in this practice that we find not only the key to the *caaqils*' 'mutational work' (Van Dijk and Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, 1997), but also the site of the innovative synthesis that characterises Somaliland's identity architecture. In Somaliland, guarantors, acting with the plastic, local and divergent practices of metic legibility, facilitate the state's sight of its citizens.

The role of *caaqils* as identity verifiers for passports comes from their routinised use by the Somaliland state, as established by the 2002 citizenship law and described above. It also has historical precedent from the British Protected Person (BPP) passport prior to 1960.⁴⁰ To obtain a BPP passport, an individual had to produce evidence of his or his father's birth, make a declaration as to the truth of the supplied information, and be vouched for by a person of standing. This information was checked against Protectorate records – requirements that the British embassy at the time felt were more than sufficient for assuring

⁴⁰ Prior to this, letters of introduction from the colonial administrators and surveyors acted as a form of internal passport. Colonial administrator Harald Swayne, for instance, wrote in his diary that: 'The possession of a bit of paper written on in English is believed to guarantee the safety of the bearer's life, and we have often been begged for scraps of paper by men who wished to go alone by a short cut over disturbed territory' (1895:117). Here, interestingly, identity was not at stake and thus authoritative identification as a Somaliland tribesman was undertaken by the representative of the colonial power not the *caaqil*.

the authenticity of applicants (Note from Embassy, 1956). However, this process was problematic. Embassy correspondence recorded the case of British passport-holder Muhammed Abdillahi, who also stated that he was born in Tefferi Bar in Ethiopia (ibid). The British embassy had a signed application form from Muhammed, but one that stated his birthplace within the Protectorate as certified by the local headman. It seemed, therefore, that Muhammed had been vouched for on both sides of the border, and that a definitive identity could not be verified because the Hargeysa and Harar registration directories did not tally. As a member of the British consular staff in Addis Ababa put it, '[i]t was because neither side knew what the other claimed, that life was so difficult for both' (Confidential Note, 1956).⁴¹ In this case, it was not the lack of record-keeping that was to blame, but the difficulty of evaluating the authenticity of the claim of belonging. Here we thus have an anecdotal example of how a dependence on vernacular vouching exposes the state to risk if it cannot also verify the truth of a claim. Importantly, it also shows how traditional leaders have long been used as identity intermediaries, a legacy that I traced above.

E-Passports

For a long time, Somaliland's passports were lo-tech desiderata of Somaliland's efforts to materialise its statehood, and displayed ambiguity and incompleteness. However, together with the push towards biometric voter and 'civil' registration that I analyse in Chapters 5 and 6, there has been an attempt to bring other aspects of Somaliland's official identification up to the same level. Hence in September 2014, the Department of Immigration under the Ministry of Interior embarked on another ambitious identification programme by upgrading Somaliland's passports (Dalsan Radio, 2014; Somaliland Sun, 2014a). From 2014, there were to be four types of 'e-passport' (ordinary, seaman, civil service and diplomat) at a cost of around \$120 each (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014).

The new 'e-passports' form part of Somaliland's bid to have up-to-date attributes of a modern (recognisable) state. As reported on the Somaliland Mission to the UK's website, 'Somaliland also hopes that E-passport holders will have better chances of getting visas from international embassies. ... It is hoped that the new passport will further enhance Somaliland's quest for international recognition as the country builds its institutions' (Somaliland Mission, nd). The campaign to validate the new Somaliland e-passport as a credible travel document was supported by the Ethiopian government's decision to review the entry visa fees at land border crossings, and to agree in conjunction with the Somaliland Department of Immigration that only the new e-passport would be accepted after December 2014 (Geeska Afrika, 2014). Moreover, the introduction of the new passports can be seen within the context of the Somaliland-Somalia dialogue. In October 2013, Somaliland had announced that the Somalia passport would not be accepted as a valid travel document

⁴¹ It was necessary to identify Muhammed uniquely and unambiguously as *either* Ethiopian or a British Protected Person because Ethiopian regulations at the time forbade dual nationality. Today the legal cooperation between Ethiopia and Somaliland permits movement across the border, and dual nationality is possible.

within Somaliland because of concerns about fraud (Somaliland Sun, 2013b). In comparison, Somaliland's passport would be updated to meet international standards of electronic verification and fraud protection, thus emphasising its distinctness from the 'fraudulent' passport of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

The innovation of the new e-passports is the incorporation of an electronic photograph and the scanning of the fingerprints on the right and left hands. As well as 'biometric' registration, the verification procedures have been strengthened. Dayib, a senior civil servant in the Department of Immigration, informed me that as well as some form of ID, the applicant now has to provide information about their landlord or evidence of their property deed, and the names, addresses and telephone numbers of witnesses who had known them for five years (Interview, 2014). These requirements are seen as ensuring that only 'authentic' Somalilanders are able to take the passport, with Dayib (*ibid*) emphasising that without the relevant ID, there would be no opportunity for 'Ethiopians' to acquire such documentation (an issue of migration politics I discuss in the following chapter).

Rather than *caaqils*, the new e-passport thus calls on guarantors from a wider pool of social actors in the form of landlords and witnesses. Of course, Somaliland is not the only state to include guarantors in its verification procedures for passports. As I noted in Chapter 2, a great many states around the world require counter-signatories and witnesses, particularly in cases where there is no credible documentation or physical appearance has changed. It is notable in the Somaliland case, however, that despite the incorporation of hi-tech biometric registration into the new passport, there is still a place for vouching. In fact, for new applicants, this form of verification appears to have equal or even greater standing than other forms of paper documentation, emphasising the importance of the role of the guarantor in overcoming Somaliland's verification problem.

The Disconnected Terrain of Official Identification

It is clear from my discussion above that there is currently no overarching state-led identity-management system in Somaliland: no 'ecosystem' of official identification processes and artefacts, in which the parts interconnect and interact. Up to 2015, IDs in Hargeysa have been in many cases incipient or weakly formulated, and incoherent with one another. They have been produced for discrete purposes, often without any 'back-office' functionality, meaning that it is difficult to assess on a system-wide basis whether someone has applied before, and thus to ensure unique official identities. As I explained in Chapter 2, effective state legibility requires that identities be uniquely ascribed to individuals, and that these identities can be verified across different encounters with the state. In other words, the Mohamed Ahmed Ismail that has a driver's license issued in Hargeysa is the same Mohamed Ahmed Ismail applying for a passport. However, to date the Somaliland state has not been able to connect up citizen's identity across different kinds of documentation. The creation of

different systems and databases for voters, accredited drivers, passport-holders and citizens has led to a fragmented information landscape that is chaotic rather than panoptic. This means that they may not be seen as reliable or useful. For instance, Kinsi, a young woman recently graduated from the University of Hargeysa, argued that ‘In Dahabshiil they don’t trust ID; they want your clan elder’ (Interview, 2014).

The difficulty in creating an integrated identification infrastructure is compounded by the fact that there are very few identity ‘encounters’ with the state in which official ID is required. There are no pensions or social security payments, for instance. One does not need ID to purchase a phone or sim card; very few people have bank accounts or pay taxes. Guarantors are thus not only used by the state, but also by commercial entities in order to overcome the verification problem that has arisen from the paucity of ID cards. For instance, Telesom, Somaliland’s large telecommunications company, requires a *dammiin* for a Zaad account, the mobile money platform (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). ‘If there is no ID, we solve that issue’, explained Abdirahman, a Telesom manager, by allowing someone to bring a guarantor (Interview, 2014).

In all these forms of ID, we therefore see the importance of guarantors, in particular clan caaqils, as key intermediaries for the Somaliland state. In most of these cases, the process of verification begins from scratch because applicants typically do not have a pre-existing ‘chain of verification’ in the form of another piece of paperwork: guarantors therefore become essential for certifying applicants’ identity to the state. This is even the case in the new biometric e-passport, which uses physical data to ensure 1-to-1 verification, but for which the initial *authentication* of applicants still requires the use of alternative forms of ‘metadata’ (World Bank, 2014).

The use of informal patches such as these is hardly surprising in the context of Somaliland’s ongoing, vastly under-resourced state-building project. With a relatively small national budget and enduring international limbo, it is little surprise that Somaliland’s technical and administrative infrastructure has capacity and resource gaps. At the national level, the state has weak penetration beyond the main urban areas, and faces the challenges of low population density, a scattered pastoralist population, porous and contested borders, and poor road and distribution channels, inhibiting its ability to ‘broadcast’ power (Herbst, 2000). Significantly, the eastern frontier zone with Puntland is host to repeated skirmishes and disputes as separatist groups in Sool, Sanaag and Cayn continue to contest the Somaliland state’s authority in this region, making the extension of projects of national identity politically friable as well as logistically difficult.

Within the government, administrative gaps also mean that there are strong factors in favour of pragmatic solutions, which may explain the use of guarantors as a form of outsourced labour. Archiving and record-keeping have suffered from the interregnum of the

war, and insufficient attention afterwards: there are no national archives in Somaliland, and ministerial papers have for a long time been kept haphazardly, including anecdotally in people's homes (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2013). Much of state administration appears to be done on paper, in the form of handwritten memos and receipts; and at least until 2014, ministers had Gmail accounts rather than centralised email systems (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2013–14). The Somaliland state is therefore not a networked bureaucracy able to connect the actions of its citizens across different administrative encounters, but is characterised by informal practices of data management. Compounding the absence of Weberian file keeping and bureaucratic rules is the logistical weaknesses of Somaliland's government offices (for instance, in terms of sufficient computers and trained administrators); and the lack of institutional memory because of oft-changing personnel. Importantly, competitive relations between ministries and agencies borne of political jostling for financing and prestige (as demonstrated by the tensions between the Ministry of Interior and the NEC I discuss in Chapter 6) makes collaboration in the form of data sharing and technical integration difficult and infrequent.

Certainly, these issues of under-specified administrative procedures, weakly functioning institutions, undertrained personnel, and lack of funding have contributed to retarding the development of a well-organised system of identity management in Somaliland. This would seem to lend support to the 'weak state' explanation for the use of guarantors in Somaliland's identity infrastructure that I discussed in Chapter 2.⁴² However, whilst these issues of disconnect and dysfunction do seem to offer an explanation for the pre-eminence of guarantors (borne of pragmatism), they do not adequately explain two important features of the Somaliland case: that the use of guarantors is clearly inscribed in official practices (for instance, the 2002 citizenship law), and therefore not simply an *ad-hoc* solution to weakness or inefficiency; and that these are not just any guarantors, but specifically clan elders.

Hybrid Solutions?

The importance of guarantors to addressing Somaliland's verification problem might therefore be explained by the hybrid political logic at work in state institutions. The marriage between indigenous norms and those of the 'modern' state began during the early state-making conferences of the newly independent Somaliland (Bradbury, 2008:69). In subsequent political meetings throughout the 1990s, Somaliland's government gradually evolved from a system based on consociationalism (clan power-sharing) to one comprising the institutions of liberal democracy, including an executive president, independent judiciary, elected lower house, and multi-party elections, and other 'hybrid' institutions, notably the Guurti, the clan-nominated upper house (ibid; APD, 2002). Explanations for the

⁴² Additionally, we should consider the impact of neopatrimonial practices at work in the Somaliland political sphere, in which political intermediaries are visible actors in government institutions; and 'clannish' logics are blamed for the exchange of favours, appointment and contracts (see Ahmed, 2013).

emergence of a hybrid system in Somaliland follow a well-worn path that suggests that ‘traditional’ governance was formally included in order to plug gaps in the ‘modern’ system that was in turn adopted for pragmatic and strategic reasons such as stability and security (Hoehne, 2009:259, 274). Clan-based institutions were seen as instilling ‘basic legitimacy’ (ibid:259) and principles of compromise, consensus, and inclusion into an otherwise winner-takes-all electoral system (Mohamed and Terlinden, 2010:77–78).⁴³

As with the Guurti’s clan representatives, caaqils may be seen as lending legitimacy to the workings of the modern state system, with the formalisation of their role in state protocols affirming them as trustworthy, capable and, indeed, essential cogs in the administrative wheels of governance. However, their incorporation in identification processes does not seem to be mainly driven by hybridity. If it were otherwise, we would arguably not have seen the diminishment of clan elders’ participation in official political life (Renders, 2012; Renders and Terlinden, 2010), or the development of biometric systems of verification to replace guaranteeing, since the political cost of doing so would be too high. Instead, I am arguing in this thesis that a combination of pragmatic and symbolic considerations explains the prominent role of caaqil guarantors.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I argue that the use of guarantors within Somaliland’s official identification schema enables not only the verification of identity, but also the *authentication* of claims of belonging. The attestation of age and nationality by clan elders in order to determine eligibility for official documentation interpellates Somalilanders as both citizens and kinsmen (a dual subject), and thus the ‘official identity’ by which the state recognises someone is underwritten by and imbued with the ‘metic’ legibility of the genealogical idiom. This means that the names and relations of genealogical situatedness constitute essential data for identification and verification, which has consequences for those citizens and residents of Somaliland who are not made legible by genealogy, or only in qualified ways. By reproducing a hegemonic narrative of authenticity in which ‘Somalilandness’ is articulated, acts of verification are more than the bureaucratic confirmation of sameness: they are nation-making.

In this chapter, I set out the multifaceted architecture of identification in contemporary Somaliland, in which new forms of official documentation draw upon the genealogical idiom for verification. Faced with non-recognition and hence circumscribed external support, minimal economic resources, and the legacies of conflict, political actors have drawn on what works best, modifying existing institutions, innovating new processes, and marrying ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ norms in a ‘delicate balance’ (Walls, 2014:29; also see Bradbury, 2008). I argued that essential aspects of the official legibility of land and population –

⁴³ Phillips (2013), Harris and Foresti (2010) and Balthasar (2012) are amongst those who also make this argument.

maintaining borders, asserting citizenship and enumerating the population – all display a complex interplay between state-led efforts at standardisation and formalisation, and informal particularity (and ambiguity). State-building in Somaliland therefore appears to have been inflected by the ‘vernacular’ dimension of clanship and genealogy at crucial stages. The configuration of official and vernacular practices in Somaliland’s various identification programmes has not been driven by either one side or the other of the ‘tradition-modern’ dichotomy (a duality that itself must be problematised). Rather, it is an assemblage born of pragmatism and symbolism that works to overcome the verification problem in an innovative way, and fits with the ideological commitment to genealogy reflected in Somaliland’s clan-based politics and descent-based citizenship regime. The project to create a biometric-led voter ID card in 2008 offers an important case for further understanding these dynamics, and hence is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

‘Numbers are Politics’

Voter Registration and the Politics of Enumeration in Somaliland

The best way of improving the electoral process is the setting up of a system of registration of all voters which will enable voters to cast their votes easily on the polling day. (Republic of Somaliland, 2007)

If you put in bad data, you get bad results. The people put in bad information but they wanted a perfect list. (Farhan, interview, 2014)

After Somaliland’s tense early years, the Hargeysa conference of 1997 initiated a period of rapid state-building that included the drafting and passing of a new constitution as well as a raft of legislation and institutionalisation.¹ It also activated the transformation of the system of *beel* (community) representation, by which regions and sub-clans had deputed individuals to speak on their behalf at clan meetings and conferences,² to a democratic multi-party system. However, despite the initiation of competitive elections in 2002, voter registration did not properly begin in Somaliland until 2008.

In this chapter, I analyse Somaliland’s voter registration schemes from 2002 to 2014. I trace how the state’s ‘verification problem’ drove the introduction of biometric technologies to ensure 1-to-1 matching, but how vernacular practices, in particular *caaqil* authentication, were extremely significant for identifying eligible voters. In previous chapters, I have shown how the use of guarantors for practical and symbolic reasons has enabled the verification of applicants for official ID cards. Their presence in voter registration was, however, a different matter, linked to the ‘politics of enumeration’ by which concern for clan numbers and potential electoral spoils led to multiple registrations and the programme’s massive defrauding. In this chapter, I therefore show the highly politicised roles that guarantors can play, and the effect this can have on credible verification regimes and thus effective identification. Registration is not simply a bureaucratic matter, but one intimately related to the politics of identity by determining which identities matter, who counts, and who says so.

¹ For more on this and the earlier conferences at Burco, Sheikh and Borama, see Bradbury, 2008; Paice and Gibson, 2013; Phillips, 2013; and Walls, 2014.

² This was a power-sharing system based on proportional representation, pluralism and also concessions to ‘minority’ clans (Balthasar, 2012:169). See also Lewis and Mayall, 1995.

Unlike other chapters that are arranged thematically, in this chapter I take a narrative, chronological approach in order to make clear the sequences of events and the knock-on effects of poor planning and politicised decision-making that undercut efforts to establish a comprehensive voter register. I therefore cover the aborted registration in 2002; the decision to introduce biometric technologies in 2007; the conduct of the 2008 registration, and the subsequent eighteen months of data scrubbing, political tension, and upheaval; and the post-election decisions of 2011. This chapter therefore also constitutes a case study of how identification schemes are actually constructed, particularly ‘from scratch’, and explicates the political challenges that face the draughtsmen of such projects. In Chapter 1, I noted the logistical and technical issues that have faced other African states in the rollout of biometric systems, including limited electricity access, poor training, and illegible fingerprints. We see this too in the story of voter registration in Somaliland. This case study shows that ‘technopolitics’ was central to the design and implementation of the 2008–10 voter registration, and that therefore the technical and political dimensions must both be addressed in the construction – and analysis – of official identification schemes.

Somaliland’s Early Registration Experiments

From early on, Somaliland’s electoral stakeholders understood that a voter register was crucial for identifying eligible voters, and preventing impersonation and multiple voting. The 2001 law on presidential and local elections empowered the national electoral commission (NEC) to prepare a voter register in Article 14.9, although without specifying any of the details of the registration process or indicating where further elucidation was to come from (Ibrahim, 2010:8). During election planning in 2002, the NEC, supported by a European Union (EU) technical team, formulated an ambitious plan to register all eligible voters and create a computerised database, enabling the production of a voter list for election day (Gers and Valentine-Selsey, 2002:10). This was planned as the basis of a national voter database for future elections – in other words, a massive one-off enrolment that would create a continuous electoral roll.

Registration began in autumn 2002, but was problematic from the start. Rolled out in seven of Somaliland’s urban areas (Berbera, Burco, Borama, Ceerigaabo, Gabiley, Laascaanood and Hargeysa), Somaliland’s pastoralist communities and remote rural areas were effectively excluded (Abdirashiid, interview, 2013a).³ Even within the areas that registration took place, however, difficulties emerged from the state’s ‘verification problem’. Without a census to provide a demographic estimate, the NEC used the turnout from the 2001

³ The NEC had used a variety of methods for voter education in advance of polling day, including drama groups, poetry competitions, and mobile loudspeaker teams (Bennett and Woldemariam, 2010). However, these tools were more easily utilised in the central and western regions, with less coverage in the east – home to a large proportion of Somaliland’s nomads – since Radio Hargeysa could not broadcast far beyond the capital, and poor roads impeded travel (Gers and Valentine-Selsey, 2002:15).

constitutional referendum (1.18 million votes) as a baseline.⁴ However, the absence of pre-existing identity data meant that the NEC had no way of assessing who was eligible to vote or, indeed, who was registering, since there was no information with which to verify and cross-reference registrants. Despite the use of 'indelible' ink to mark registered voters, the process was bedevilled by multiple registrations, distorting the emerging voter list. One of the first NEC commissioners, Shukri Ismail, has stated that there was a 'misconception' that registration was enumeration: 'People are [saying] my tribe is bigger than yours or we are more than you. So ... people were thinking now in the election you have to be more' (Bennett and Woldemariam, 2010:21). Similarly, Abdirashiid, another former commissioner from this period, told me: 'If we make registration then maybe one tribe will be bigger and there will be conflict [with another tribe] if their numbers are less' (Interview, 2013a). In order to bolster clan numbers – a key source of pride and traditional power – people therefore sought to register more than once where they could. As Shukri recalled: 'we tried our best but we did not succeed in time. ... [We were] giving the card and they would be coming back to you again and ... in the same area they might be taking two, three, four' (Bennet and Woldemariam, 2010:21). The widespread and obvious irregularities of registration made it clear that the resulting voter list would be inaccurate and unreliable. After just a week and the registration of around 330,000 people, Somaliland's first voter registration was abandoned (Renders, 2012:236; Simkin and Crook, 2002:3).

In its place, the NEC and the political associations that were to contest Somaliland's first multi-party election agreed to utilise two safeguards for verification and deterrence on election day: indelible ink, and the vernacular practices that I outlined in Chapter 3 and 4 (collective accountability, genealogical mapping and vouching), checking for lineage, appearance and accent. However, these proved insufficient to prevent multiple voting in the 2002 local council elections, or in the elections that followed. These also did not ensure the inclusion of the whole electorate, for whilst voters had impunity to vote more than once in some parts of Somaliland, in Sool and Sanaag voting was continuously circumscribed and delayed.⁵

At each of Somaliland's early elections, donors and observers therefore called for a comprehensive process of registration to ensure proper electoral management and prevent disenfranchisement (for instance, Abokor et al, 2006; Abrar, 2003; IRI, 2005). However, it was not possible to muster sufficient political will and legislative energy to do so prior to 2008. The close proximity of the 2003 presidential election to the 2002 poll (the first, of

⁴ This figure was considered by some observers to be inflated and unverifiable in the absence of a census (Gers and Valentine-Selsey, 2002:13; also see Simkin and Crook, 2002), and indeed it remains the highest turnout in Somaliland's elections to date (see Table 2). Nevertheless, it has been the implicit benchmark for electorate size since. This shows the difficulty of establishing credible numbers without effective enumerative tools, as I explained in Chapter 4.

⁵ Polling stations here were closed for security or logistic reasons in the 2002 and 2003 elections. Skirmishes along the border with Puntland had indeed escalated, leading to a one-day war on 29 October 2004 in which soldiers on both sides were killed, further militarising the border zone and leading to an extension of emergency law such as detention by the detested security committees (COSONGO, 2002:9–10). However, there were serious concerns about whether 'security' was being used as a way to control the shape of the Somaliland electorate by excluding members of the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli clans (Renders, 2012).

course, in Somaliland since 1967) offered a relatively credible justification for the absence of voter registration, since the priority was on delivering that important election. However, these reasons did not hold for the 2005 parliamentary election; rather this setback must be attributed to political reasons, not least the use of voter registration as a deferring tactic, part of the politics of delay that characterises Somaliland’s electoral landscape.

The Numbers Gap

After the first two elections, the government of the time expressed its intention to establish a voter register for the 2005 parliamentary election by making an explicit provision for it in the House of Representatives Law (Law No. 20-2/2005). However, registration was made hostage to two extremely controversial and politicised issues: the allocation of parliamentary seats, and the holding of a census. Somaliland’s MPs had been in post since the Hargeysa conference of 1997 on the basis of appointment. A parliamentary election thus required that constituency boundaries and the regional allocation of seats be confirmed. Protracted political squabbling over these contentious issues led to repeated delay in the drafting of the required electoral legislation; it also made it clear that the lack of demographic enumeration was inhibiting Somaliland’s efforts to effectively manage elections. Sensibly, Law No. 20-2/2005 thus made the allocation of seats dependent upon a pre-election census or voter registration (APD, 2006:21–29). In an ideal world, a census would have certainly been the answer, but it was clear that planning for one would take months if not years and could not be conducted in the time available.⁶ Similarly there had been no sustained planning on registration, let alone capacity-building, since the aborted efforts of 2002. In other words, this ‘deliberately unworkable’ law (Walls, 2014:236) effectively made the holding of timely elections impossible, and was blamed in part on intransigent MPs who wanted to postpone contesting their seat. Enormous public dissatisfaction ensued, with the threat of civil action making this a serious political crisis.

The only way through the impasse seemed to be to abandon the commitment made in Law No. 20-2/2005 to pre-election enumeration. The principal stakeholders therefore agreed to base seat allocation on the 1960 parliamentary formula for regional quota,⁷ and to insert a ‘sunset’ clause to the final law exempting the 2005 elections from voter registration (Ibrahim, 2005: note 1). Although this solution enabled parliamentary elections to take place in September 2005, it was only a temporary fix. There was no advance voter

⁶ There has not been a census in the new Republic of Somaliland. A census was conducted in 1975 in conjunction with a national literacy campaign and supported by the UN. However, hindered by drought and incomplete national maps, coverage was poor even in urban areas, and most of the data was unpublished (Cross, 1984; US Library of Congress, nd). A second census in 1987 was also geographically limited, and the Barre administration suppressed its publication (Hoehne, 2015:16; Gaani, interview, 2014; see also Cowan et al, 1986, and UN Statistics Division, 2015). The only firm demographic figures that the Somaliland government might therefore claim come from national projections (see Chapter 4) or electoral turnout and voter registration, the latter of which I show in this chapter to be highly problematic.

⁷ This was not an uncontroversial decision, since some groups argued for greater representation (Walls, 2014:237). The lack of resolution on the issue of seat allocation has been one of the factors contributing to the repeated delay of the next round of parliamentary elections in 2015. See also APD, 2015.

registration: voters self-declared their eligibility, and their name was manually entered into a registration book (IRI, 2005:20). This did not, of course, constitute ‘registration’ or ‘identification’, nor did it prevent multiple voting. Instead, these elections were considered heavily ‘clannish’ (IRI, 2005; Walls, 2014:243–45), reinforcing peoples’ identification with their kin (Balthasar, 2012:212). The complicated mixed PR-majority electoral system agreed for the lower house election meant that voters chose their candidate directly. The pre-election period was therefore characterised by widespread mobilisation along clan lines, as sub-sub-clans and their favoured candidate sought to secure support and generate backing with khat, dollars and feasts (APD, 2006). Rather than the (illusion of) clan balance that had held sway since independence, candidates openly utilised clan networks, with these being the deciding factor in political and financial support, and ultimately electoral success.⁸

The Introduction of Biometrics

As I noted in Chapters 1 and 2, biometric technologies can be a way of ensuring credible 1-to-1 identification, and for this reason have been rapidly adopted for registration purposes across much of sub-Saharan Africa. In Somaliland, the decision to incorporate biometrics was taken in 2007 as part of the design of a new voter registration system. Multiple and underage voting had increased over the period of early elections because of a combination of factors, including the solvency of the ink,⁹ the lack of enforcement of criminal sanctions against repeated voting, enthusiasm about voting, fervour amongst political supporters, and encouragement by political parties, which flouted the transport bans on election day to ferry voters to multiple polling stations (Bradbury, 2008:211). The absence of a voter register meant that there was no data with which to verify eligible voters, and no way of recording who had already voted. The lack of registration or census information also affected the management of the elections: for instance, each polling station was sent the same number of ballot papers by default, regardless of the size of the local population, meaning that some polling stations ran out and others had a surfeit, risking ballot-stuffing (APD, 2012). The early elections therefore demonstrated the importance, indeed urgency, of effective registration within a framework of official legibility.

In July 2007, the Somaliland government therefore drafted and passed Law No. 37/2007 on voter registration, which stated that registration should be ‘implemented’ at least six months prior to polling day and last no more than three months. Delays over installing a new electoral commission meant that the new NEC was only in post in September 2007, one month before the planned local council election, which was thus immediately postponed to

⁸ See Abokor et al, 2006; Bennett and Woldemariam, 2011; Bradbury, 2008; and Walls, 2014 for more on these elections.

⁹ The two local organisations that undertook domestic observation in 2003 deplored the ‘removable’ ink, noting that the offices of the three parties were ‘ink laundries for their supporters’ (Abrar, 2003:10).

the following year. Assuming ‘implemented’ to mean ‘begun’,¹⁰ this nevertheless meant that the new NEC had a window of just over two months to put in place a brand-new voter registration system. But whilst the first NEC had developed plans for voter registration (to draw from the manual records of voter names that had been taken in the 2005 election), the toxic political climate surrounding the end of its term had left almost no institutional memory. Political fighting between the president, political parties and the commissioners had led to the seizure of the NEC offices in March 2007: all paperwork had been embargoed by the government, so the new NEC allegedly did not have the documents, records or, importantly, plans of its predecessor (Gaani, interview, 2014; see also Bennett and Woldemariam, 2010:24). Added to this was the new commissioners’ inexperience: their appointment had been the result of political bargaining rather than meritocratic selection,¹¹ and none had the requisite proficiency for voter registration. As Gaani, a senior member of commission staff, said to me, ‘If the government had been serious about voter registration, NEC1 would have had an extension’ (Interview, 2014).

In spite of these problems, the stain of multiple voting in previous elections had raised expectations that the new voter registration system would be highly effective: an invitation to biometric technologies. Although the first NEC had considered fingerprint data in its early planning (Gaani, interview, 2014), Law No. 37/2007 was not written with biometric data in mind. Article 8 specified that a photograph would be taken of the registrant, but this was for visual identification rather than use with facial recognition software (FRS).¹² Indeed, the collection of fingerprints – the most common biometric data – was not specified within the registration procedure at all. The decision to incorporate fingerprint data was hence a significant deviation from the original 2007 law, and appears to have been motivated by at least two reasons.

Firstly, it was hoped that biometric registration would eliminate the multiple and underage voting that had undermined the credibility of Somaliland’s previous elections. Multiple voting was now an entrenched behaviour amongst party stalwarts, coming to a head in the 2005 parliamentary elections. Even with comprehensive civic education, however, it was believed that simple registration would not be enough to counter the impulse for multiple cards. The commissioners in favour of biometrics believed that only unique identifiers could

¹⁰ Ibrahim Hashi Jama notes in his translation that the Somali word for implementation can be read logically as referring to the start rather than the end of the registration process. It is, he admits, not clear, however, and this may be one of the reasons that this clause was amended (Republic of Somaliland, 2007:8, note 23).

¹¹ The nominations were a lightning rod for unresolved imperative (and provocative) debates about the importance of clan balance versus expertise within political institutions, the decision-making power of the executive versus the opposition’s legislative majority, the value of due process versus traditional mediation, and the fulfilment of local needs versus donor expectations. Since the 2005 parliamentary elections, the issue of clan balance within political institutions had become particularly fractious: every ‘region’ (aka clan) had to be represented to dismiss charges of inequity and alleviate suspicions of ‘tribalism’ i.e. the conduct of politics for clan interests. Since the nominations were split across the president, Guurti and the two opposition parties, this was a recipe for confrontation. Six months of political fighting over the nominations meant the sclerotic relations could only be repaired by traditional mediation in August 2007. See APD, 2007 and Walls, 2014.

¹² FRS maps facial characteristics such as distance between the eyes, nose length and jaw angle, and its efficacy depends upon the quality of the photograph, and hence can encounter problems if photographs are not taken in good light.

ensure one person, one vote. Farhan, one of the first permanent members of staff of the new commission, told me that ‘APD, Interpeace, NEC, the government and the parliament were all in favour of biometrics because they knew the issue: no ID and nomadic movement and also that people follow whatever the clan leaders say’ (Interview, 2014).

Secondly, biometric registration was expected to ensure that only Somalilanders would be able to vote: a bureaucratic fix for Somaliland’s porous borders and fragmented identification infrastructure, and an explicit move away from the informal accent-and-appearance test of previous elections. A 2009 editorial in *Qaran News* articulated the expectations that had been placed upon the biometric system: ‘We all know that Somali speaking people in the Horn of Africa look alike each other and [it is] difficult to distinguish between them; but the biometric system will filter out the non-Somalilanders’ (Al-Mutairi, 2009a). As discussed in Chapter 2, biometric verification can only confirm that particular biophysical data matches persons already registered: it cannot determine the identity or eligibility of voters. However, even at the planning stage, expectations were high that biometrics would provide a failsafe proof of identity.

These were strong arguments in favour of biometric registration. Behind closed doors, however, the NEC was split, pitting proponents against more cautious members who sided with Interpeace, the NGO tasked by the donors with supporting the elections, in favour of a more modest system. Nevertheless, the decision to go ahead with the biometric system was made. The scale of the task was considerable even for advanced democracies. Assuming a voting population of around 700,000 (based on the 2005 turnout), the timeline of between one and three months required by Law No. 37/2007 would mean that the commission would have to register between 9,000 and 27,000 voters a day, taking not only basic details but also high-resolution fingerprint scans for each person.¹³ This required a huge investment in properly trained personnel and technical equipment, since every part of the registration technology needed to be sourced, but at the time of the announcement the NEC had not yet issued the tender for the supply of registration equipment, opened any local offices or recruited any technical staff (Farhan, interview, 2014; Somaliland Times, 2008a). The East Africa Policy Institute was one of those that expressed concern about the tight timeline, questioning the wisdom of a ‘crash program’ in voter registration and issuing a prescient warning that the ‘unrealistic warp speed’ would lead to the postponement of elections, and ‘rancor, outright chaos, [and] confusion’ (Gabose and Garuf, 2008).

More importantly, key questions and basic issues had not been addressed, including how and where the nomadic population would be registered, whether communities living in Ethiopia’s Region V would be able to vote, or how members of the diaspora could be

¹³ This assumes a six-day working week, with 26 days for one month and 78 days for three. The East Africa Policy Institute also attempted to estimate the daily rate of registration, putting it at 15,555 people every day (Gabose and Garuf, 2008).

registered whilst still abroad (ibid).¹⁴ Since the fitful efforts of 2002, there had been no progress on enumerating voters or demarcating electoral constituencies, meaning decisions about the size and shape of the electorate were based on political agendas wrapped up as security or logistical concerns. The coincidence of nomadic populations in the east of the country where polling had been suspended in previous elections meant that registration planning would have to pay particular attention to ensuring registration could take place in Sool and Sanaag, but this, like the complexity of the challenges of time, staffing and resources, was seemingly overlooked or deferred (see Renders, 2012), or the result of political decisions to shape the electorate (see Kelley, Ayres and Bowen, 1967).

Importantly, it became clear that the legislative framework that had been put in place for voter registration, including the timeline, was unworkable. The NEC announced the tender for the procurement of the equipment in March 2008, only four months before the elections for local councils were supposed to take place, making delay inevitable. In an echo of 2005, voter registration had again become an impediment to timely elections rather than a boon. The commission therefore prepared an amended law in June 2008 for the House of Representatives, which formally enunciated the schedule for registration: a preparatory and awareness-raising phase of 25 days, core registration in each of the six regions for a minimum of five days each, and a supplementary period of 15 days for anyone who was unable to register during the core phase.¹⁵ A second critical addition was the inclusion of an electronic scan of the registrant's fingerprint. As noted above, although the NEC had announced biometric registration in February 2008, the original version of Law No. 37/2007 had not required the collection of biometric data, meaning that there would have been none with which to develop a biometric database. This discrepancy was now resolved in the amended law, although new ambiguities were introduced since it was not stated which finger was to be scanned. There was also no further elucidation of the photograph requirement, meaning that the amended law did not rectify the failing of Article 18 to specify the process for photographing the registrant, an aspect of the database record that was to prove prone to abuse and error, and which the FRS was therefore only partially able to address. The failure to specify these aspects of the biometric data would have deleterious effects on the quality of data collected later in the year.

After the political upheaval of the previous months, the NEC now rushed to complete its preparations in time. Recruitment for enumerators did not begin until 23 September 2008. When an attempt at open recruitment failed (police shots were fired in an attempt to control the crowds of hundreds of applicants according to Kuhlman, 2010), the NEC hired directly from the pool of recent graduates from Hargeysa, Amoud, Burco and Gollis universities. At

¹⁴ Law No. 20/2001 permits overseas voting at Somaliland diplomatic offices (Republic of Somaliland, 2001: Article 6.2) but the non-existence of these, together with the additional logistic burden, meant that registration of diaspora voters was not feasible, and they were to be excluded from registration unless present in the country.

¹⁵ The 45-day registration period announced by the NEC in February 2008 did not include the awareness-raising phase, but the five days per region (30 days) plus 15 supplementary days, although this has to be inferred from the law. See Ibrahim's annotations in Republic of Somaliland, 2007.

each site, candidates had to complete a handwritten test about their knowledge of IT processes (for instance, by describing the steps one should take if a printer stops working), with the top scorers being recruited (Ilyaas, interview, 2014). Successful applicants were given a basic introduction to the kit, troubleshooting tips, and a brief overview of the registration context. NEC team leaders and Ministry of Interior (MoI) legal advisers also received guidelines on conflict resolution in anticipation of problems at registration centres (Asli, interview, 2014; Ilyaas, interview, 2014). However, Farhan, a member of the NEC staff, observed that the three days of training was consumed with logistics and payment, particularly resolving disputes related to the expectations of a high fee, which the graduates had been led to expect (Interview, 2014). Testing, training and development was squeezed into just a few hours (ibid). Meanwhile, the NEC also had to take delivery of and organise the registration kits;¹⁶ complete the set-up of the NEC headquarters, regional and district offices; develop and confirm its own internal procedures; and undertake awareness-raising – all essential tasks that had been left to the last minute. The rush of the last month also meant that there was no formal testing of the equipment – a basic technical safeguard that might have anticipated, and therefore addressed, the problems that were to arise (Gaani, interview, 2014).

The 2008 Registration

It is the first of its kind in a Somali territory that the voters are registered. It is the big day ... a really BIG DAY. (Somalia Online, 2008a)

A year after the instalment of the second electoral commission, six months after its decision to utilise a biometric technical model, and six months after the presidential election should have taken place, voter registration, hailed as part of ‘the nation’s historical legacy’ (Jire, 2008), finally began in Somaliland on 14 October 2008. Beginning first in Saaxil (see Map 2), registration moved to Awdal and then to Majoodi-Jeex. Registration was interrupted, however, by the detonation of three vehicle bombs in Hargeysa on 29 October, which killed around 25 people, including two UN staff members, and injured several others.¹⁷ International staff working with the NEC were quickly withdrawn following the incident, and ECIL, the Indian technical contractor, removed its two management staff permanently from Somaliland, leading the NEC to announce the postponement of the registration process due to ‘technical difficulties’, which actually referred to the need to quickly adapt to the new technical configuration following ECIL’s departure (Farhan, interview, 2014; Garowe Online, 2008). After a five-week delay, registration resumed with the president and the leaders of the two opposition parties demonstratively registering to vote in Hargeysa on

¹⁶ The kits consisted of a sturdy, waterproof briefcase containing a laptop pre-installed with registration software, digital camera, fingerprint scanner, colour printer and mouse (Mathieson and Wager, 2010:16). See Photo 1.

¹⁷ It was the first such attack in Somaliland and was blamed on Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen, the jihadist network operating in the southern territories of Somalia since 2006, motivated, it was assumed, by the desire to disrupt the regional talks taking place in Nairobi that day. The consequences were significant for Somaliland, since this was the first attack of its kind. It was roundly denounced, and there was a concerted effort to seek out the remnants of the Hargeysa sleeper cell, leading to a bout of arrests. See ICG, 2009.

1 December (Qaran News, 2008). Registration then moved to Togdheer, and finally Sanaag and Sool, the two regions along the contested border of Puntland (Map 2), finishing in January 2009.

The Registration Process

Each registration centre was manned by a team consisting of two NEC operators, two police officers, three party observers, and a court official or MoI representative. The physical layout of the centre was not dissimilar to a polling station (and indeed, these would be future polling stations). Voters formed a queue that was monitored by armed police, who would permit one or two individuals to enter the building at once (although it was often more than this); should they see an elderly person in the line, he or she would be brought to the front for rapid processing (Ilyaa, interview, 2014). The queues were generally orderly, but the long hours and hot weather led to queue jumping and place holding, and sometimes, therefore, arguments, according to Asli, then a team leader (Interview, 2014). She told me that the police used whip-like sticks to keep order, occasionally resorting to firing in the air when the crowds became rowdy (Interview, 2014).

After entering the centre and having their eligibility confirmed (see below), registrants would take a seat in front of a NEC official who would begin the registration process. First, the voter's four names would be recorded,¹⁸ and then their gender, date of birth, age, place of birth, address (place of residence), and marriage status. After these details were entered, the voter's photograph was taken via a camera on a vertical arm, sometimes with the aid of a lamp (Photo 2). Next, a fingerprint from both hands was recorded using the finger-scanner. Samatar, a university graduate who had worked as a registration officer, told me that sometimes the operator would have to lean over to press the finger in place because of problems with the legibility of the prints (Interview, 2014). If the prints were illegible, the operator was able to retake them. Two boxes needed to be checked by the operator to permit confirmation of the data. Samatar noted that there was also the option to uncheck a box that required fingerprint and gender data (Photo 3), a software decision that would later be shown to have enabled registration without fingerprints, and hence the commission of fraud. Finally, two unique numerical identifiers for citizenship and voter ID cards were added, generated by the system based on the registration centre code, the date and the voter's details (the name and number of the centre and the operator were preloaded into each kit).

¹⁸ Four names (a person's given name, followed by their father, grandfather and great-grandfather's names) were taken for extra assurance, rather than the three names used on an everyday basis.

Photo 1: The registration kit containing camera, lamp, laptop, printer and fingerprint scanner.



Photo 2: A registration team at work in Awdal. A woman waits for a party observer to laminate her ID cards.



Photo 3: Snapshot of the registration software. The voter's details are entered on the left, the photo is captured in the centre, and the fingerprints on the right.

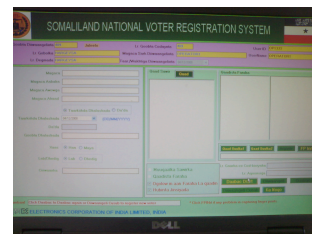


Photo 4: The perforated sheet of preprinted ID cards, here printed with a voter's photograph and details.



Photo 5: The front of complete citizenship (top) and voter (bottom) ID cards.



Photo 6: The reverse of the national (top) and voter (bottom) ID cards, with fingerprints in the place of a signature to mark the confirmation of the voter.



Sources: 1–3, Samatar, 2008; 4–6, my images with material provided by Samatar (4) and Farhan (5–6) in 2014.

Once all this data was captured, the operator printed a draft of the record, which the voter would then either review and consent to, or a member of the registration team (sometimes a party representative) would read it to them if they were blind or illiterate (Asli, interview, 2014). Once the information was confirmed, the operator would print three pages: the first would add the photograph and the alphanumerical details to the two cards, which were pre-printed onto a single A4 sheet (Photo 4); the second and third were summary slips, one for the MoI and the other for NEC to ensure they had paper records as well as electronic data (Samatar, interview, 2014). The cards were then signed, the citizenship card by one of the MoI officers, and the voter card by the NEC team leader; marked or signed by the registrant; and a special hologram carrying the emblem of the Republic of Somaliland was affixed as a security measure (Photo 5). The cards were finally detached from the larger sheet, and then laminated – a process that took some time, and, because of this, was often undertaken by party observers or the MoI officer (ibid). As a final precaution, the registrant's finger (typically the left small finger) was dipped in indelible ink to prove they had registered.

Verifying Eligibility

A key aspect of Law No. 37/2007 was the recognition that the eligibility of voters in previous elections could not be verified in the absence of a civil register, census or existing voter list. The ‘sunset clause’ introduced in the 2005 parliamentary elections law had postponed registration, but it had also deferred the conduct of a census, which was politically unappetising. Under the 2002 Citizenship Law, proof of Somaliland citizenship can be obtained by an individual that has completed a form from the Citizenship Office, and had their identity verified by a MoI-registered caaqil at court (Republic of Somaliland, 2002: Article 3.1).¹⁹ Very few Somalilanders have such documentation, however. The basic issue of how to verify the identity of eligible voters *qua* citizens therefore remained.

Law No. 37/2007 had thus provided for the creation of a second card – a citizenship ID. Noting that the legal process of verifying citizenship involving a declaration at court was not ‘easy’ (due to the fixity and infrequency of courts), the voter registration law amended the formal procedure to permit officials of the MoI and the local court to confirm citizenship at registration offices (Republic of Somaliland, 2007: Article 7.2). Should the MoI and court officials be unable to confirm the citizenship of a prospective registrant, the law provided for reversion to the conventional vouching practice: an accredited caaqil or well-known person with immovable property in the district (a *dammiin*) should be brought before the registration committee to attest the person’s citizenship (ibid: Article 7.5). These arrangements would, it was hoped, enable every applicant to have their citizenship corroborated in the absence of formal documentation. Of course, this had been the procedure used in 2002, when the NEC had explained this safeguard to the EU technical team as the ‘local knowledge of individuals [that] would ensure that inappropriate people did not vote’ (Gers and Valentine-Selsey, 2002:10). The formal identification system was thus designed from the beginning to include and even depend upon the verification practices of the genealogical system of identity, demonstrating the synthesis at work in Somaliland’s identity architecture.

At each registration centre, MoI officers assessed registrants’ citizenship and confirmed they were eligible to register. In the absence of confirmatory ID, potential registrants were supposed to be quizzed on a range of points in order to verify their citizenship. In practice, the question was often a perfunctory request for one’s clan name since the clan elders and community leaders roped in as MoI representatives supposedly already knew most voters in their area: ‘It has to be somebody they know. So if they know that person then they will send them to us [the operators]’ (Asli, interview, 2014). There was also a second level of identification in cases where the person was not ‘known’: ‘If they get suspicious, then they allow to bring them somebody they know’ (ibid). This was one’s caaqil or local elder, the conventional backstop that the MoI and NEC had incorporated into the registration process

¹⁹ These citizenship certificates are discussed in Chapter 4.

in order to resolve the verification problem. Caaqils and elders from each area sat within the registration centre, or were summoned by telephone to authenticate someone's claim should there be suspicion or uncertainty (ibid). This process was not designed to confirm identity in terms of someone's name or other details, but simply to ensure that only Somalilanders could vote.

Significantly, because people could register wherever they liked, the caaqil for each clan was not necessarily present, particularly in the cities, meaning that verification took place at the highest *jilib*. In fact, though, most people I asked about this told me that they were only asked their four names and their clan name, and did not need to be authorised by a third party (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). In the event of a query or dispute, the matter was referred to the court official, who could make clear the legal ramifications of falsely claiming citizenship, and more significantly demand a moral commitment to the truth in the form of an oath. Obsiye, a young professional working in Hargeysa who had worked as a NEC deputy team leader in 2008, told me he thought that the oath was an effective mechanism:

Actually mostly people don't like swearing because as Islamic people, they know the punishment for it. So if you are saying 'are you swearing for Allah?' some of them if they are telling lies they go back, but if they are telling truth, they say it. It's a good test. (Interview, 2014)

However, it appears that this verification was superficial. Ilyaas, a trainee lawyer at the time of the voter registration, had been appointed as a registration centre legal adviser, working to ensure that everyone within the centre had the requisite information to conduct the registration properly, and to answer questions from the public about the citizenship law. He told me that the time constraints meant that the citizenship verification was little more than a cursory check:

At that day there was no clarification about the citizenship. A lot of people are coming. [Speaking quickly] 'Are you Somalilander?' 'Yeah.' 'Which village are you coming from?' 'I am coming from that village.' 'What tribe are you?' 'I am tribe B.' 'Okay, continue, continue; give him, give him.' I am saying 'why are you giving him? Please ask him a lot of questions as the law is stating. It is not enough "are you a Somalilander?"'. But there is no time. (Interview, 2014)

Kayse, another university graduate who had worked as a registration officer in 2008, confirmed this: 'Anyone who comes will be registered because we do not have time. A hundred people are on the line' (Interview, 2014). The registration had been set up to give not only the voter ID card but also a citizenship ID card, hence anyone able to short-circuit the verification process – for instance, by learning the requisite names of clan and village – had access to both. The lawyer Ilyaas felt that the process had not been rigorous or systematic, and that, at least in the registration centres he worked in, citizenship had not been duly tested: 'Actually, that day we are not working how to give the people citizenship ID. Anyone can take. Even you [Anna] can take! You can follow the queue and you can take. There is no problem' (Interview, 2014).

Age was the other determinant of eligibility. Many people in rural Somaliland do not know their birthday, and in 2002 this had been a source of complication in the determination of voters around the age of majority. Unlike the test for citizenship, where an evaluation of status was undertaken within the context of communal scrutiny, the age criterion was complicated by two factors. Firstly many people in Somaliland do not know their actual date of birth, but merely the season or the year. For this reason, documents typically contain the standard response ‘1 January’, but in the case of the election, the task was to prove that someone was over fifteen years *before* the election, and hence knowing the month of birth was an important technicality. Secondly, it was not clear whether someone had to be over the age of majority at the time of registration (autumn 2008) or at the time of the election. This was a significant complication since the election date kept shifting.

In recognition of the absence of systematic birth registration documentation, the 2007 voter registration law had codified the practice used at previous elections, which was for parents or polling station officers to estimate age (Article 25). Verifying whether the applicant was over the age of majority (fifteen years) was nevertheless challenging for the operators. ‘The age was very difficult,’ said Obsiye, the deputy team leader (Interview, 2014). ‘It was possible that someone with a young age was very big, or someone older like 20 was very small. So we just said bring your parents and give evidence. The parents say this is my son, he was born this time, I know it, I swear it.’ The oath was again used as a test of veracity, but the registration officers I interviewed considered this to be weaker than in the case of citizenship: ‘They used to bring their parents and they used to swear’, said Asli (Interview, 2014). ‘Once the person swears, that’s it – you can’t do anything about it, even if he’s 12 years old.’

This therefore appeared to be an inadequate check of eligibility, but with no other information with which to crosscheck the identity of registrants, testimony had to be relied upon. These issues highlight the weakness of vernacular verification in the context of political processes such as elections. Rather than individual authentication, the connection to potential political spoils altered the grounds of trustworthy corroboration. Whereas in other interpersonal situations, such as those I described in Chapter 3, ‘1-in-many’ verification works to provide communal assurance of an individual, here we see a process where the emphasis on the ‘many’ created a different political calculus. Indeed, multiple actors, interests and motivations contributed to the defrauding of the register, as I describe below.

Fraud Revealed

When voter registration was completed in early 2009, it was, for a brief moment, considered a success, even if the process had been, as a statement from a group of Somaliland scholars put it, ‘a logistical nightmare and a daring undertaking’ (Fadal, 2012:10). Registration had

taken place at over 1,000 centres across the six regions and returned over 1.3 million voters (Mathieson and Wager, 2010). The figure was immediately scrutinised, however. It was a plausible number assuming a national population of approximately 3 million, and it also aligned with the turnout from the 2001 referendum. However, it was twice as many voters as the turnout three years previous (670,322 voters – see Table 2), and Interpeace estimated that the figure was inflated by around 40 per cent (Mark, personal correspondence, 2013).

During the interregnum necessitated by the Hargeysa bombing, two significant developments had taken place. Firstly, registration had had to proceed without the international experts: although they continued to offer support via Skype, to all extents and purposes NEC staff now undertook database management and maintenance on their own (Farhan, interview, 2014). Interpeace personnel, still constrained by the heightened security concerns, were also unable to travel east of Burco and so voter registration proceeded in these politically friable regions without external oversight (Tamsin, interview, 2013). Secondly, and most importantly, the delay had enabled groups in the remaining regions of Togdheer, Sanaag and Sool to mobilise people for registration. Whilst the numbers of registered people in Saaxil and Awdal varied within 20 per cent of the 2005 turnout (Table 2), in Togdheer and Sanaag tens of thousands of voters had been added (over 170 per cent and 135 per cent growth respectively). These figures alone indicated that something very wrong had happened in Somaliland's first voter registration.

Table 1: Number of registration errors and cleaned records by type.

Type of Error	Number
Total registration records	1,363,192
Errors identified by biometric filters	
Records without biometric data/no picture	96,111
No fingerprints	726,583
Duplicate fingerprints	49,928
Duplicate faces	65,588
Duplicate face and fingerprints	4,815
Name-birthdate matches	7,507

Sources: Mathieson and Wager, 2010; David, personal correspondence, 2013.

Widespread stories of attempted double registration meant the electoral stakeholders could not ignore the fact that the database possibly contained records that were not of unique voters. The review of the registration database revealed two serious problems: false data and missing data (Table 1). The false data included fake records (discussed below); and false photos (photographs held up to the camera, including anecdotally ones from magazines and books), which were sometimes the result of benign intervention or because diaspora relatives were registered *in absentia*. The missing data was similarly of two kinds: tens of thousands of records had no photograph (or at least images that were so poor that they could not be usefully compared); and an enormous number of records were also devoid of

fingerprint data.²⁰ It appeared that registration had been afflicted by the problem it had sought to eliminate – fraud – with a group of Hargeysa public intellectuals later sadly noting, ‘[T]here was no single authority or group to blame ... [fraud] has been aided and abetted by all stakeholders’ (Fadal, 2012:10). In what follows, I propose three main sets of reasons for the errors and fraud of the 2008 Somaliland registration: technical problems; administrative and procedural problems; and deliberate fraud, and I explore these factors in turn.

Technical Challenges

In many cases, the registration programme’s technical errors emerged out of poor, rushed or inexperienced planning and decision-making, which reflected the logistical, financial and human resourcing weaknesses of the NEC and the Somaliland state more broadly. This was the first time electronic registration had ever been undertaken in Somaliland, so some teething problems were to be expected. However, as I noted above, the rush of planning and the absence of piloting meant that at least some of these problems should have been mitigated in advance of the core registration phase. For instance, logistical problems meant that some of the generators and cars were without fuel meaning that the sophisticated biometric technology could not work, and 20 registration teams were unable to get to their sites because of transport difficulties (Somaliland Times, 2008b). This latter issue was particularly important because it ran the risk of cutting off rural communities and nomadic voters – a potentially serious problem because many nomads had yet to begin the seasonal move back towards the coast, and therefore needed to access registration sites in the interior (Observer, 2008).

The registration kit also presented complications, which may or may not have arisen from the original procurement decision, in which the inexperienced vendor Copenhagen Elections, rather than purchasing a tried-and-tested off-the-shelf system, had acquired the registration in a ‘cut-and-paste’ way (David, interview, 2013). In most cases, the kits functioned, but there were reports of laptops failing and printers jamming (Somaliland Times, 2008b).²¹ The poor-quality fingerprint scanner sometimes took as many as twenty-five attempts to capture a scan, and therefore held up registration (Mathieson and Wager, 2010:28).

Significant issues arose also from the basic format and operability of the registration software. The original technical tender had been supported by Interpeace, but Interpeace is not a technical organisation. The authorship of the tender had rather been by an international consultant (who departed Somaliland immediately afterwards) and Farhan

²⁰ I exclude here the formally missing data of the 12,165 voters, which had to be retrieved and re-entered to the database, since these records were, though lost, assumed to be complete (see Mathieson and Wager, 2010).

²¹ Walls (2009) argues that kit failure was within expectations (60/1100), but that the dusty conditions led to failing printers.

(then a recent IT graduate, now a member of the NEC staff) who wrote the final specification. He admitted, however, that he was inexperienced. ‘I was very young and junior but they accepted it. I looked on Google to look at how to do the ID number’ (Interview, 2014). A crucial problem in the software was that errors could not be addressed at the time of inputting: even where benign errors were made by operators, they could not be fixed or even flagged as problematic, but simply became part of the database, with the intention that any duplication would be addressed by the biometric software (see Grace, 2009; and Mathieson and Wager, 2010). However, this simply stacked up problems for the cleaning phase, which lasted much longer than any of the Somaliland electoral stakeholders, or indeed the public, expected.

Fingerprint Errors

The major technical challenge arose from the original poor decision to utilise the data of only two fingerprints. Rather than the failsafe of all ten fingerprints, reliance upon only two prints increased the difficulty of guaranteeing unique matches. It also meant that when the fingerprint scans were omitted or of poor quality, a record had no biometric data at all. The poor quality was attributable to environmental conditions: manual labour wears away prints; and henna and sweat from the heat also made it difficult to capture the data. Since these problems are common to fingerprint scanning (World Bank, 2014:30), safeguards could have been built into the system.²² Instead, the Somaliland registration software permitted the overruling of the ‘mandatory’ fingerprint scan since the NEC had been concerned that manual labourers, such as farmers, and also those with physical handicaps would be excluded if it had been compulsory for registration. The former team leader Asli told me that she would tell registrants whose print could not be taken to leave and come back another time (particularly in the case of henna, which she would tell them to remove) (Interview, 2014). However, the situation with farmers and manual labourers who simply did not have legible prints was more difficult, and the operators found themselves under pressure to omit fingerprints for these registrants. Kayse, who had worked to operate the registration equipment, explained that ‘these people do not understand the system, and so as soon as you refuse someone because his fingerprint is not working, he is saying, “this guy is refusing to register [me]”’. Then the head of village, the clan leaders say, “why don’t you register this person?”’ (Interview, 2014)²³ In some cases, it appeared that operators supplied their own fingerprint in the place of the registrant in an effort to benignly move the process along or for other malicious reasons, which would later account for 220 entries with the same fingerprint (Mathieson and Wager, 2010). Even though Law No. 37/2007 and the NEC guidelines specified that fingerprint data should be taken, the poor training, absence of quality control, and pressure exerted upon operators meant that in half of all cases fingerprint data was not captured (ibid).

²² Fingerprint data is notoriously difficult as a single source of biometric data, as demonstrated in Ghana, for instance, in 2012 (Chapter 1).

²³ This pressure on operators would increase over time, as discussed in more detail below.

Critically, the operators’ best defence against those trying to manipulate the system did not function in any of the regions. This was the automatic fingerprint identification system (AFIS), which should have been running concurrently with registration to ensure that registrants were double-checked against the emerging national database. Whilst a daily summary of the activity of each registration centre was encrypted to a CD-ROM, and a weekly report sent back to the NEC headquarters, there were no rolling checks of this data (Mathieson and Wager; 2010). AFIS had been one of the conditions of funding by the project’s donors, and although a February 2008 NEC concept note had planned for it to be run after registration, it had in fact been incorporated into the process, as the first NEC had originally proposed.²⁴ However, ECIL, the Indian company providing the registration software, had not completed the programming for AFIS by October 2008 (Farhan, interview, 2014). The NEC, not wanting to stomach any further delay, therefore began registration without it. This was a grave mistake, since it meant that it was possible for someone to register in more than one location, and even in more than one region, negating the primary advantage of biometrics, and placing enormous pressure on the database managers to be able to identify duplicates after registration.

Face Recognition Errors

The second major technical oversight was the fact that only the parameters for fingerprint data had been specified. The colour photograph taken in the registration process had only been to identify the registrant/voter, as explained above. However, when the extent of the fraud became clear in 2009, it was decided that FRS was to be applied to supplement the poor fingerprint data. However, FRS had not been included in the original tender or contract,²⁵ meaning that FRS-compliant images (in good light with faces clear of coverings) were not taken during registration. Introducing FRS at this stage of the registration was ‘unprecedented’, according to an international expert (Grace, 2009); and bolting it on to an existing system was ‘highly unusual and particularly difficult’ (Creative Associates, cited in Mathieson and Wager, 2010:28–29). The use of FRS led to software programming complications and also did not identify duplicates at the level hoped for, because of the high volume and the poor quality of the data, which required the technical expertise of consultants and additional computing power (Grace, 2009:2; Kuhlman, 2010). Moreover, even with the new filter, underage registrants (and those that may not have met other eligibility criteria) could not be technically detected by the system, and there were thus limitations on how much could now be done to retroactively save the voter register.

²⁴ NEC1 had planned to complete each region’s registration, reviewing and eliminating all ‘impurities’ and mistakes, before moving onto the next region (Gaani, interview, 2014).

²⁵ According to Farhan, a NEC civil servant, ECIL, the technical subcontractors, agreed to build a retroactive FRS scrub for an enormous fee (allegedly \$1 million), leading to delays and ultimately a breakdown in the contract between ECIL and Copenhagen Elections. A new firm, Biometrics, formed of two ECIL employees from the original team, was brought in to help with software development and database management, working remotely from Hyderabad (Farhan, interview, 2014).

Administrative and Procedural Faults

In addition to these technical problems were five administrative and procedural decisions that contributed to the high number of duplications. First was the extremely tight timeline. This was, after all, the first voter registration in Somaliland, beginning from scratch with a totally new technical infrastructure, and without the back-up of up-to-date enumerative data. In the first region, Saaxil, large crowds and teething problems with the process meant that registration was slow and cumbersome. As Asli, a team leader noted, 'It was the first region so people didn't have much idea on the first day. Everything was new to us' (Interview, 2014). Media reports leapt on the fact that in some places registration took an average of 20 minutes per voter rather than the planned three, meaning that only a few people could be registered every hour: after the first two days, it was claimed that only 5,000 people had been registered in Berbera (Somaliland Times, 2008b). It quickly became clear that more time would be needed for registration, and President Dahir Riyale Kahin (known as Riyale) wrote a letter to the NEC on 18 October criticising the process (Tamsin, interview, 2013). Berbera's community leaders also called for more time for registration, but this request was not heeded by NEC, in part because of the need to keep to the pre-agreed national timeline of 45 days (although now proving, as had been predicted, to be fantastically ambitious) and in part because the commissioners, engaged in mutual denunciations in the Somaliland press, were distracted.²⁶ The thirty-day *ab initio* process was in retrospect far too short for such a complicated process.

Disconnected Sequencing

Second was the decision to sequence the registration across space and time rather than undertake simultaneous national registration. The sequential phasing of voter registration can be a good approach to appropriately manage limited resources (Evrensel, 2006), but in Somaliland the short timeframe and poor technical infrastructure meant that registration centres were not networked together or to the NEC in Hargeysa. Voters were therefore registered but their identity was not matched to other entries, opening a window for multiple registrations, which NEC and Interpeace assured could be rectified later. However, word quickly spread that it was possible to register more than once without the system flagging up the duplication (Rooble, interview, 2014a; Gaani, interview, 2014). By the time the registration teams reached the last three regions, political parties had been able to mobilise vast numbers of people to register once and more than once, bussing in kinsmen from Ethiopia and Djibouti, renting houses for their accommodation and feeding them to sustain them for their 'double shifts' (Sharif, interview, 2014; see also APD, 2012). Had AFIS been running, these efforts would have been useless; but in the face of technical corner-cutting, these mobilisation tactics paid off.

²⁶ During the first week of October, four of the commissioners voted to oust the NEC chairman who managed to retain his position following an agreement between NEC and the parties (Kuhlman, 2010).

Voter Illiteracy

The third procedural error was the absence of effective civic or voter education. This is a deeper issue in Somaliland, pertaining to the weakness of standardised school curricula, and the scarcity of resources to undertake such programmes (Ubox, interview, 2012; Yasin, interview, 2014a). Though scheduled to begin on 19 August, the volume of work to be done, together with Ramadan in September, meant that the NEC ran only one week of awareness-raising at the start of October 2008. The planned information campaign was supposed to publicise the registration process, eligibility criteria, locations of registration centres, and regional registration dates; and to take place in conjunction with the opening of district registration centres from where further information and templates for personal information were to be made available (NEC, 2008). However, as in 2002, the material was not well distributed beyond Hargeysa, hampered by the limited broadcasting infrastructure, widespread illiteracy, and the dependence upon low-capacity community organisations.

Although there was in general great interest and public support for registration, the limited nature of the public education campaign raised concerns that not all eligible voters would know what to do and where to go (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). Since the NEC had decided to create static registration sites,²⁷ it was particularly important that members of the nomadic communities received information about their location, but, as in 2002, the public awareness campaign had little permeation beyond the main urban areas, relying instead upon key influencers and word-of-mouth. This therefore opened up a space for political messages that encouraged multiple registrations, and misinformation about the nature of registration.

Impunity

Multiple registrations, incomplete data, and register-stuffing were enabled in part by a permissive regulatory environment and the absence of effective sanctions against fraudulent behaviour, a fourth procedural mistake. In earlier elections, double voters had their belts and shoes confiscated until the end of voting, or were penned together under the community's watchful eye (Abokor et al, 2006:11), but there were no such measures during the 2008 registration except inking, which had already been proven to be removable with the liberal use of strong solvent. Article 33 of the 2007 Voter Registration Law had prohibited the issuance of more than one voting card to a citizen, invoking the penal code's penalty of a two-year prison sentence for falsification of public documents by citizens or 'any officer of the Ministry of Internal Affairs who issues a citizenship form to a non-citizen' (Republic of Somaliland, 2007). However, this legal provision required enforcement, which does not seem to have happened. The absence of enforceable sanctions combined with the

²⁷ Rather than mobile registration units, for instance, such as had been used in Mozambique and Senegal (Evrensel, 2006:7, 11). It is important to note that even without registration, it was estimated that more than 70 percent of the nomadic population did not vote in the 2002 election because of the distances involved (Gers and Valentine-Selsey, 2002), suggesting that the static approach to election management was erecting barriers to inclusion.

weak norms prohibiting double registration and the inadequate public education campaign meant there was little to dissuade those who wanted to attempt registering more than once.

Inexperience and Poor Training

The fifth enabler of errors and fraud in Somaliland's registration was the poor training of registration officers. This is not to undermine the great enthusiasm and commitment of many of them. Kayse, for instance, a young graduate who had been recruited from Hargeysa University, remembered that he felt that 'it was a big responsibility ... I was contributing to one of the development activities of my country, and also I am helping my community to be registered by using the latest technology' (Interview, 2014). In spite of such sentiments, the officers were ill prepared for the many problems they encountered (Samatar, 2008). Although the training had included practice on the registration kits, the operators had not used the laptops in the field or under pressure (temporal or psychological). Moreover, since the whole team was drawn from different organisations and locales, the registration teams did not train together or sometimes apparently even meet until the first day of registration, affecting teamwork (Asli, interview, 2014). Importantly, some of the personnel also appeared to be inexperienced or incompetent, despite testing at the recruitment stage. For example, the criteria for the data-entry officer had been computer literacy, but the contracted individuals sometimes did not turn up for actual registration: they sent a cousin or another person to take their place and earn the 60,000 shillings (around \$15) instead (Samatar, interview, 2014). These new enumerators were unfamiliar with the system. Former registration officer Samatar noted that there were several steps to go through to operate the software; without training, it was difficult even to turn the system on (ibid). Likewise, the legal advisor Ilyaas recalled that 'the guy who was responsible for taking the fingerprint of the people [had] never use[d] a computer before. He is saying, "Hey, Mr Lawyer, where do you restart the computer?"' (Interview, 2014)

The need for technical competence had thus been recognised, but it was more difficult for the NEC to ensure such individuals were in place and able to work. Although Ilyaas' ironical story may have been an exception, overall these issues added to the problems facing the technical system. As Breckenridge has noted about South Africa's biometric smart card, '[t]he biometric data contained on a smartcard and on the national database is only as reliable as the original scanning – whether manual or automated – and only as secure as the trustworthiness of the officials charged with this task' (2005:280).

Competition, Clout and Curiosity: Motivations for Fraudulent Registration

As well as the technical and procedural hurdles, duplications were also the result of fraudulent entries, which were difficult to distinguish from those made in error, but were deliberate and driven by a number of different (though sometimes intersecting) motivations,

including enthusiasm for ID cards for their symbolic and instrumental value; low confidence and mistrust in the process; and the distortion of clan numbers based on the desire for political gain. I identify four kinds of motivation for repeated or incomplete registration.

Pragmatism

It could be imagined that the ID cards being created by the registration process had symbolic value, which made registering attractive and valuable. The cards were artefacts of Somaliland's improved state capacity – evidence that it could now produce identity documents for the whole population. Even more poignantly, in the face of persistent non-recognition, these substantiated Somaliland's existence as a state: they were a tangible symbol of national identity, emblazoned, after all, with the words 'Republic of Somaliland'. These were good reasons to stand in the long queues and register for the cards, but they do not explain why people registered more than once or with false data. In part, this may have been because of the scarcity of identity documents in Somaliland. NEC1 commissioner Abdirashiid recalled that in 2002, this had been a driver of multiple registrations: 'there was no ID card therefore the youngsters took seven times' (Interview, 2013a). A member of the Interpeace team similarly suggested that there had not been 'access to such items produced professionally in the past. This made the card within itself a highly sought after item', particularly for young and underage people (Mark, personal correspondence, 2013). This was not just any card but one that would permit voting (still a relatively novel activity after the years of dictatorship and conflict), and which also had other potential uses. For instance, it had been suggested in the media that having a voter card would assist people in their visa applications for travel abroad: a powerful motivation for having more than one card in a place where passports are often shared between relatives (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2012–14). At base this was also an understandable response to the context of poverty and paucity: who knew what this card could give access to now or in the future?

Fear

As well as enthusiasm, people were also nervous about the implications of the collection of biometric data, and this may account for the dearth of fingerprint data in the initial voter register. Older people recalled the anxiety from previous census and registration drives undertaken by the British administration, which were used to introduce income and property tax (Gaani, interview, 2014; Shuuriye, interview, 2014). During the 1974 census, there had been great concern again that this would form the basis of a poll tax for livestock, and many nomadic people had apparently fled to the Ogaden with their animals to prevent counting (Gaani, interview, 2014). These suspicions remained, and may have stopped members of the older generation from registering, in conjunction with the travel and long queues (Abdirashiid, interview, 2013a).

Amongst younger people, the concerns were different. Some people were worried that the fingerprint data would be given to European and North American border agencies and that this might affect their chances of travelling out of Somaliland (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). These suspicions had not been alleviated by an effective public education campaign. Without reassurances about the destination of the data (the registration was after all funded by a group of Western countries), some people might have avoided giving fingerprint data or encouraged duplicates. ‘We didn’t tell them anything about how to do it [register]’, NEC officer Farhan told me. ‘The money for voter education was quite small. The NGOs did not go to the regions. There was only clan leaders saying, “don’t put your fingerprint”, and Islamic leaders saying, “don’t do it”’ (Interview, 2014). Although the failure to provide fingerprints was not technically a commission of fraud, the omission of this important data contributed to the poverty of the database and the inability of the biometric scrubs to function as expected.

Incredulity

Multiple registrations appear to have also been driven by the poor credibility of the registration – a fatality of well-publicised technical problems, such as the slow biometric kits, and the absence of a sustained public education campaign. As discussed above, because registration was undertaken in phases across the country without continuous database integration, it was possible for people to register in one centre and then later in another, within regions and across them. Right from the beginning, rumours and tall tales of fraud circulated widely: for instance that children as young as ten years old had been registered, or that people had registered as a different voter for every fingerprint (SomaliNet, 2008). Rooble, my research assistant, told me that as registration progressed, people understood that success in double registration was easiest in rural areas: ‘people who wanted to double vote went there’ (Interview, 2014a). ‘There was no technical control in Saaxil’, Gaani, a member of the NEC administration, admitted. ‘People knew this information by the time of Awdal. [As time went on] everybody knew that there had been a huge messing up of the system’ (Interview, 2014).

As well as the lack of credibility, multiple registrations seem to have been motivated by incredulity about the system’s ability to verify voters. Reports on previous elections suggested that ‘rampant’ multiple voting was driven more by curiosity (about the invisible ink, perceptible only under ultraviolet light; and the consequences of double voting) than evidence of organised attempts at ballot fraud (IRI, 2005:22–23). Despite these lessons, there were few apparent impediments to multiple registrations in 2008, and people sought to ‘test’ the system. From curiosity, impulsiveness, game-playing or malice, young men and women queued up again to see if they could vote despite being underage, to investigate whether the ink really was indelible, to try to evade the gaze of the polling station policemen, or to accrue one more vote than their friends in a running tally (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014).

My research assistant Rooble, for instance, told me that he had been mobilised by his clan to return to his home town to register right at the start of registration, but that he never considered going to the countryside to secure a second card. However, when registration began in Hargeysa, Rooble, an educated man who has worked for NGOs in Somaliland, found that the centre was adjacent to his family house, and he was curious about the process:

On the last day, out of curiosity, I registered myself. This one they did not ask any questions. They had seen me [living there]. My brother said he was just checking the system. I was a little bit of nervous about whether it would say I was already registered but nothing. It was bullshit! When people realise this can take place, they tell everyone. The system was not effective. Everyone knew it was a failure. Everyone wanted to deceive the system (Interview, 2014a).

Pride and ‘Balance’

The fourth impetus for malign duplication was the politics of enumeration. Despite efforts by the NEC to argue otherwise, voter registration was seen as an unofficial census in which the population numbers of each region would be established (Gaani, interview, 2014; Jimcaale, interview, 2014). Clan size – and perceptions of that size – has implications for political power and fighting strength in traditional Somaliland society, and no clan wanted to be shown to be less than they were or wanted to be, and particularly not less than a rival clan. The principle that ‘numbers are politics’ is built into the DNA of Somaliland’s political settlement.²⁸ Between 1992 and 1995, inter-clan fighting over political spoils split Somaliland and made clan numbers highly sensitive (see Balthasar, 2012, Bradbury, 2008 and Walls, 2014). For since clans occupied particular parts of the country, even a fairly simple count of households in the interior, for instance, might have revealed the numbers of people within each clan, thus tipping the scales of political influence in one direction or another. Moreover, since delegations to the peace conferences that characterised the state-building efforts of those first conflictual years were based on representation proportional to estimated clan size, there were significant consequences should those estimates prove to be inaccurate (Hoehne, 2015:15). Indeed, as John Drysdale noted at the time, representation was the key bone of contention: ‘if representation is faulty and improperly accommodated [in Somaliland], the structure of peaceful clan coexistence breaks down’ (1992:8). Civil-society leader Dacaad admitted that although the publication of numbers at the clan level is not regarded as a risk in contemporary times, many people still believe that sub-clan size is still a ‘clan secret’ (Interview, 2014). As NEC civil servant Gaani put it: ‘No one wants to find their tribe is less than another’ (interview, 2014).

²⁸ This phrase was used by a prominent member of Somaliland’s civil society in a private meeting (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014).

As in 2002, registration was seen as providing 'accurate' statistical representations of prevailing (and deep-seated) assumptions about clan size, which – in the absence of enumerative data – could shape critical political and constitutional decisions. Without a census or effective constituency demarcation, there was a perception that region size should equate with population size, meaning that Togdheer and Maroodi-Jeex (geographically the largest regions) perhaps should have the highest number of voters. There was also the idea that, as in 2005, the future provision of state services would be determined by the size of the population in each region (Balthasar, 2012:212). A newspaper article in 2009 captured these sentiments, stating 'the registration process challenged tribal demography that is sensitive in Somaliland and the region in general, because all tribes wanted to score high in the census' (Al-Mutairi, 2009b). Speaking in his office in Hargeysa in 2014, Gaani said that he felt 'it added fuel to the fire that district and region were added to the challenge. No one wants to be small ... so there [was] a need to inflate so that you can get a part of the cake' (Interview, 2014).

This 'cake' was of course the political resources of the state. Despite the formal rapprochement of the 1990s, subterranean clan jealousies endured. Since the early part of the decade, politics had increasingly run along lineage-based tramlines: political parties were assemblages of clan interests, and the old adage of 'clan balance' disguised the *realpolitik* of inter-clan relations. As Chabal and Daloz have noted more generally, legitimacy in hybridised or neopatrimonial political systems is based on securing and maintaining communal gains from the state: being in opposition therefore has no intrinsic value because access to resources is limited or non-existent (1999:55). After narrowly missing out on the presidency in 2003, opposition party Kulmiye had waited in the wings for six years and counting, and patience was wearing thin amongst the party leadership and its supporters. The lack of state-regulated campaign finance in the 2005 parliamentary race had meant that many new MPs owed their office to clan backing – often at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars – and these backers expected reimbursement in kind.²⁹ The Isaaq, particularly the Habar Awal and Habar Jaallo that backed Kulmiye, had been the main winners of the parliamentary election, but ministerial positions were still dominated by Riyale's Gadabuursi kinsmen (Abokor et al, 2006:21; see also ICG, 2009). Clan political elites were therefore strongly motivated to ensure that they got the best outcome in terms of political representation. Even were party affiliation to change before the election, what mattered was that clan members were registered, so that 'the sum of the total cards belong[ed] to the same clan and so they [c]ould come together when the need to support a candidate from their kinfolk arises in future elections' (Dukseyeh, 2013).

²⁹ Monies raised from clan members paid for campaign material, vehicle hire and incentives for supporters and prospective voters such as khat and money to pay off debts. In some cases, people used their entire personal fortune – including selling their house – in order to finance their parliamentary campaign; they then expected to be able to recoup these costs in state office. See Verjee et al, 2015.

There was therefore pressure within sub-clans to ensure that their members were registered, and this positively motivated efforts to get a high turnout during core registration. In some cases, this appears to have arisen from the understanding that community members were out of the country at the time of the registration but would return for the election, and so would need to be able to then vote. In others, there were deliberate efforts to augment numbers, with the bussing in of kinsmen from the Haud (Isaaq) and Djibouti (Issa), and within and between regions (Gaani, interview, 2014). This therefore led to multiple, false and underage registrations in order to return registration numbers that political leaders felt accurately represented the size of their community. Phillips also suggests that multiple voting was strongly driven by a feeling that every clan should have an ‘equal opportunity’ to do so: ‘the ability to transgress the system was not the particular privilege of one group over another’ (2013:63). The same logic appears to have operated during the registration phase.

The incentives to ensure that regions (aka clans) had high numbers of registered voters put pressure on registration officers to enrol underage or repeat registrants. Although caaqils have an interest in correctly elucidating their members for intra-clan business (for instance, determining *mag* contributions) and in applications for personal identity documentation (as explained in Chapter 4), the voter ID card was intimately connected to potential political spoils. As Hussein, a local researcher, argued, it is ‘very difficult to overcome the mindset [of] numbers, numbers, numbers’ (Interview, 2014).

Clan elders were strongly implicated here. It is true that in many places, particularly the early regions and less politicised areas, elders faithfully did their job; but in those places where contestation was greatest, caaqil authentication failed as a safeguard for procedural legitimacy. ERIS, the election monitoring firm engaged in late 2009 to assess the process, explicitly blamed local elders for exerting influence upon registration officers to increase the numbers of cards available through falsified registrations. ‘The last resort in identifying voters is to be vouched for by the local elders, and it is this which has failed to block duplicates’ (Mathieson and Wager, 2010:6). An independent audit of Interpeace’s assistance in 2010 similarly found that operators had been encouraged to leave out key details, thus enabling voters to register more than once, although its authors blamed a broader group of ‘politicians, clan elders and some members of NEC ... [for] encouraging these malpractices, advising registrants not to provide fingerprints and either bribing or pressurizing registration staff to admit these’ (Tamsin, interview, 2013). Interpeace was less clear that elders were specifically responsible. The Interpeace mission financial advisor observed that: ‘[deliberate derailment by elders] is harder to pin point ... However, given general observations of how both elders and political elite can flex their muscle to manufacture outcomes which suit only themselves, this possibility is real’ (Mark, personal correspondence, 2013). Whether elders actively encouraged fraud, abetted it or merely turned a blind eye, the vouching safeguard failed, meaning the use of caaqil authentication was a weakness rather than a point of strength.

Since the registration staff were pulled from the main universities and sent to a number of different regions, in many cases they were able to resist pressure from the community: being from another part of the country meant there may have been limited leverage over them (Asli, interview, 2014; Samatar, interview, 2014).³⁰ However, in their own communities, they were conspicuous. Former deputy team leader Obsiye said that when he conducted registration in Hargeysa where he was known, he was under community expectations to discharge his duty to clan.

Sometimes it was very difficult, because some of my people, some of my clan people they are coming and they are saying 'Hey Obsiye, we need ID card, give us one, talk to your guys'. So they are trying to influence my colleagues. It was difficult – I cannot imagine it. Even my family was coming, they are saying these are our kids and we need to get ID. I would say he is not eligible, but he will get it when he grows up. (Interview, 2014)

Presumably, not everyone was as conscientious as Obsiye. In some locations, registration team members allegedly sat up through the night fabricating records (Farhan, interview, 2014). Motivations for doing so differed: for some, they were coerced to do so by local leaders (whose guests they were); others were pressured by clan and political leaders to fulfil their communal duty and deliver for the clan. Others were encouraged to commit fraud for financial incentives: the *per diem* for the enumerators was, after all, only around \$15, which had to cover accommodation and food. There had been upset during training because this was seen as low (Samatar, interview, 2014), explaining why some registration officers might have welcomed the cash payments of reportedly up to \$200 to conduct additional registrations (Farhan, interview, 2014). Businessmen and wealthy individuals supported clans' political objectives by providing war chests of cash, which were distributed by mobile representatives going district to district (ibid). Initially, these schemes financed the after-hours registration of people bussed around the registration districts; as time passed, however, people realised that they did not need physical registrants, but that digital photographs and some creative license would suffice (ibid). In the areas in which fraud was highest, illegal register-stuffing took place, with enumerators creating fake records with made-up names, absent relatives and even famous celebrities, such as popular Somali singers, US actor Eddie Murphy, US television personality Oprah, and US President Barack Obama, who was reportedly registered in Burco (ibid; Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). The software had not been designed with adequate safeguards (as described above), meaning that it was possible to import an electronic photograph and leave out fingerprint scans. This stuffing increased over time, particularly because as the initial figures became public, there emerged a baseline which clans then aimed to surpass in their own registrations. In this way, the 2008 registration exercise acted as neither an effective proxy enumeration nor a successful voter registration.

³⁰ For this reason, NEC polling officers for the 2012 local council elections were drawn from different regions so that no staff would work within the region they were from.

Fixing the Register: The Technopolitics of Data Rescue

The scale of error and fraud in the registration database was such that significant ‘cleaning’ of the register was needed. The cleaning of biometric databases is not unusual since biometric identity comparison typically produces a high number of false duplicates that need to be reviewed (often manually) to distinguish duplicates from false matches (Evrensel, 2006).³¹ However, the level of duplications in Somaliland was much higher than anticipated (around 150,000 invalidated records or 11 per cent of the database), requiring extensive ‘scrubbing’ of the data in a process that took many months and precipitated a political crisis.

Tensions obviously ran extremely high during the five months of cleaning.³² Although designed to ‘rescue’ the voter register, the ‘cleaning’ became a politically sensitive matter: people were concerned that regional registration numbers could be augmented or reduced during the cleaning operations, and the likely adjustment of the number of registered voters from the now-public levels was potentially explosive. Many people had accepted the multiple registrations during the registration phase because the NEC had assured them that the central server would eliminate the duplicate records, but now the opposition parties in particular were nervous that the cleaning would not be uniform across all areas (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). In order to try to pre-empt such disputes, members of Somaliland’s civil society advocated for a comprehensive civic education programme, working particularly through traditional leaders, to demystify the process and emphasise the neutrality of the technicians undertaking the cleaning (Fadal, 2012). Such interventions by civil society members were critical to keeping the registration process on track because the new delays in finalising the voter list had led to further deterioration in Somaliland’s political situation (see Garowe Online, 2009). The delays caused by the October bombings, the poor and fraudulent data, and inaction by the government (particularly over meeting its funding commitments) meant that registration would not be complete in time for the planned 29 March presidential election, preparations for which had not yet even been undertaken by the increasingly discredited NEC (Tamsin, interview, 2013).

Of course, delayed elections meant extended terms. Whilst the opposition parties called for a caretaker government, the Guurti voted on 28 March to extend Riyale’s term for another six months to 29 October 2009, meaning that the election would now be held on 27 September (a fourth postponement).³³ In the resulting political furor, voter registration was singled out as an impediment. Although the 2007 voter registration law had made an election without a voter list illegal, opposition leader Silaanyo argued that it should be scrapped if it

³¹ For instance, the 2008–09 Afghanistan voter registration process produced 280,000 duplicates from a population of 8.2 million registrants; whilst the 2008 Mozambique exercise contained an estimated 400,000 ineligible entries (Evrensel, 2006:45).

³² This included the 40 days added to the timetable for FRS (Walls, 2009).

³³ The Guurti’s repeated extensions unintentionally or deliberately supported the ruling party. Although this was justified in 2007–09 (and again in 2015) by reference to the constitutional caveat permitting electoral delay in the case of national security concerns, delay also benefitted the sitting elders, whose own election is supposed to follow one year after presidential elections (Ibrahim, 2015). The Guurti’s actions during this period led people to criticise it as a barrier to democratic progress (see Hoehne, 2013:7).

continued to hold up elections, meaning that what had been seen as a supporting strut of the elections was now the proverbial stone in its shoe.

Whilst a new political settlement in May led to agreement about a new election date, moving forward on the voter register was more difficult. The donors insisted on a technical deadline of 21 June 2009 by which time the remaining duplications had to be purged, but this was not met. Rather, an increasingly embattled NEC turned on Interpeace, which called for new membership of the commission. At a hearing on the timing of the election in July, the NEC chairman Jama deplored that the management of the election was 'in the hands of [the] donors', calling it a 'great tragedy' and arguing that it was Interpeace and the donors that were responsible for the final voter register – hence implicitly claiming that the NEC would not be culpable should the election be held without a voter list (Somaliland Globe, 2009). According to the *Somaliland Globe*, Jama made it clear that the election would take place on 27 September with or without voter registration, even if this meant that donor funds were withdrawn (ibid).

As the face-off between NEC and Interpeace escalated, Interpeace was roundly blamed for the poverty of the data, and the delays in creating a final voter list, in what became known as the 'server problem'.³⁴ From a combination of political manipulation and smearing, and genuine misunderstanding and crossed wires about its role, Interpeace was routinely denounced in Somaliland's media. A story on SomaliNet captured this narrative:

Interpeace itself was telling the NEC and the government that their 'Server' was able to pick up double or triple registrations. It became apparently clear that Interpeace failed and their 'Server' failed big time, when they published the list on 28 of July 2009. The number they published was more than 1 million voters. Almost double the 2005 voter list. It just can't be taken serious. It is a total failure. (SomaliNet, 2008)

Later, *Qaran News* would run a story in which the writer claimed that 'Interpeace is part of the failure in Somaliland Voter Registration, because it failed to generate accurate result from the Server, which is under its direct management' (Al-Mutairi, 2009a). In fact, this perception was incorrect: it was not Interpeace that directly managed the server, but the acting registrar (a NEC employee) and the commissioners. However, the continued failure to appoint a national registrar, who would have had statutory responsibility for the registration, meant that there was no one within the Somaliland institutional architecture with public responsibility for the process (David, interview, 2013). Despite Interpeace's continued calls for this appointment, it had become stuck in the familiar quagmire of 'clan balance'.

It has been noted in other contexts that hi-tech voter registration processes often trade sophistication for transparency: critical components of the process are placed in a 'black

³⁴ The 'server' was the storage and processing units in which the database was stored.

box' that only a few experts understand (Evrensel, 2006:3; Jasanoff, 2006). Members of the political elite, civil society and the public felt that Somaliland's registration process had been hidden from view: although there were continual reassurances that appropriate technical solutions were being applied, and that no changes were being made to the original data, clear updates, in a language in which the lay public could understand, had been few. In May 2009, the Independent Scholars Group had asked: 'Why couldn't the companies and agencies responsible for the SERVER process provide a reasonable but firm target completion date as well as an estimate of what percentage of the its [sic] work has been accomplished, to help all concerned plan their election strategies?' (Fadal, 2012:17) Although some of this information had been provided, it had only been to the NEC and the political parties. The Somaliland public instead had to make do with provocative and ill-informed media reporting, party statements (in which they declared their lack of confidence in the server operations), gossip and rumour (ibid).

'Throw Out the Whole System'

In the face of enormous pressure to create a credible register, the process and database was reviewed in July 2009 by a specialist firm that offered Somaliland stakeholders a blunt choice: 'throw out the whole system' (which they advised against because of the loss of the 'immense' effort and cost, and the ramifications for confidence in the election); adopt more rigorous scrubbing parameters (a process that would take weeks but could be completed within the electoral timetable); or extend the production timeline to bring in a specialist team (thus requiring a deferral of the election) (Grace, 2009:2; Mathieson and Wager, 2010:34). The consultants advocated for option three, or a version thereof, but the parties unsurprisingly chose the second option – make the list the best it could be in the time available – with Kulmiye leader Silaanyo telling the press: 'They promised that the server will do its job and would not be an obstacle for the election' (Somaliland Times, 2009a).

However, when, after further cleaning, Interpeace presented the electronic draft voter list to the NEC and the three political parties on 27 July 2009, a political crisis ensued. In a shock move, the NEC chairman announced on the BBC Somali Service on 28 July that the list was unusable, that a complete voter list had not been ready by the deadline anyway (and so did not actually exist), and that the election should go ahead without voter registration (Tamsin, interview, 2013). This announcement was supposedly reflective of sentiment within the NEC, as four of the seven commissioners had expressed concern about the unreliability of the voter list in a public letter, advocating for elections in the 'traditional Somali way' (American Embassy Nairobi, 2009: para 1). Members of Somaliland's civil society were appalled that the NEC was prepared to abandon twelve months of work and its own stated commitment to holding an election with a voter register, but privately it was said that the president had press-ganged the commissioners into supporting his preferred outcome, so as

to prolong ruling party UDUB’s stay in power (American Embassy Nairobi, 2009: para 6; Tamsin, interview, 2013).

The new crisis revealed the weakness of the rule of law in Somaliland. In fact, neither the NEC nor the government had the legal or constitutional grounds to declare the holding of the election without voter registration, since the voter registration law, passed by parliament in 2007 and revised in 2008, had made a voter register a legal requirement (Ibrahim, personal correspondence, 2013). Since that law had not been suspended or annulled, the newly harmonised law on presidential and local council elections had not contravened the 2007 law, and the NEC was unable to divest itself of its statutory duty to undertake voter registration, voter registration remained a pre-requisite for the 27 September election (Mohamed, 2009; UDDAA, 2009). Nevertheless, it was clear that the ruling party UDUB’s political agenda was shaping the state’s response to election management, abrogating the NEC’s independence, and eroding the spirit of consensus and cooperation that had brought the parties together but a few weeks earlier. For the ruling party, for whom cleaning would not invest the list with greater numbers, it was the list itself that had become the issue of contestation, and hence why the list – as a political object – needed to be jettisoned.

The Fantasy of the Clean List

The situation in Somaliland further deteriorated when NEC chairman Jama wrote a scathing open letter on 30 July excoriating Interpeace (part of ‘an aid mafia’) for the registration’s technical problems (Jama, 2009). Significantly, he laid the blame for what he called ‘irregularities’ in the voter list on the ‘server’ rather than on the culture of double voting, which could have been eradicated or managed via a substantial public information campaign, and the enforcement of sanctions against those who broke the law. His position allegedly reflected the mood in the country, which was that people did not blame others for trying to register more than once or not provide fingerprints – indeed, this should have been allowed, I was told, because the ‘culture’ of doing so could not be changed (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2013–14). Rather, they blamed the system that had promised that these fraudulent entries would be caught. Asli, the voter registration team leader I interviewed in 2014, told me that:

I got a bit disappointed because we went through a really hard, tough job; it wasn’t easy. But the thing was it wasn’t our mistake, it wasn’t their mistake, it was the system – it was the system they chose. You can’t say it was a bad system but it wasn’t a good one. They said there was a machine, the server, and they said that anyone who did more than once, it would cut it out. (Interview, 2014)

Interpeace, of course, disagreed: the system could only do so much, and in its 25 July 2009 press release, Interpeace had belatedly sought to disabuse Somaliland stakeholders and the public about the infallibility of the voter registration system, stating ‘No system can catch all fraudulent registrations [just as no justice system can catch all criminals and perpetrators]’

(2009:1). However, it was too late: expectations had been raised (by NEC and Somaliland’s electoral stakeholders) that the expensive biometric system could eliminate double voting and identity fraud. Observers and those close to the process warning that this could never be, and that voting would still require additional safeguards, including indelible ink, voter education and legal enforcement, but the repeated scrubbing had perpetuated the fantasy of a ‘clean list’ (Grace, 2009; ICG, 2009). The technical process, which had long been seen as the way to save the register, was now also being seen as a hindrance to its production, and hence to the holding of elections – a perhaps predictable outcome from what Wrong calls the ‘over-selling’ of biometric elections (2015). For instance, this journalist wrote in *Qaran News*:

A high-tech biometric technology is [being] used in the registration; however, the use of such technology was too early for Somaliland due to lack of public awareness and infrastructure in the country. [...] The capacity of the server could not process the high number [of registrations]. At this point we can say, modern technology undermined the growing democracy of Somaliland. (Al-Mutairi, 2009b)

This was a significant shift in the discourse around the registration, and played into the blame game between the NEC and Interpeace. The NEC accused Interpeace of interference and broken promises about the technical process, whilst Interpeace accused NEC of obfuscation, incompetence and an inability to navigate the political landscape. This spat revealed the two perceptions at play in Somaliland’s registration project. In many respects both sides saw these positions as incompatible or opposing dynamics, with Interpeace, a non-technical organisation charged with failing to meet technical objectives, blaming the problems on the political context; and NEC, ostensibly a non-partisan institution that was heavily implicated in the political stew of recent months, seeing the process as being one of technical failure. In fact, registration is always a technical *and* political assemblage, but the belief that one part of the process could be distinguished from the other led to the blame and recriminations that spoiled the NEC-Interpeace relationship, and dragged the production of a final voter list into a political quagmire.

‘The List Had to be Saved’

In the months that followed, Somaliland faced a spiralling political crisis, in which Interpeace was expelled, the opposition parties declared a boycott of the planned election and threatened impeachment, and skirmishes in parliament revealed escalating tensions that were reflected by growing public disquiet.³⁵ In late August and early September 2009, street protests in Hargeysa increased in intensity (Hoehne, 2013:8). Protestors burnt tyres, threw stones, and blocked the streets with debris. On 12 September, police used live rounds and tear gas on a crowd outside parliament, resulting in the death of four people, and the detention of over a hundred protesters and bystanders (Somaliland Press, 2009). This was the most unstable political period in Somaliland since the internal wars of 1994–96 (see

³⁵ For more on this period, see Walls, 2014:276–81.

Walls, 2009). The narrative around voter registration had long been that it was essential to the democratisation process, itself necessary to advance the stability of Somaliland. Now registration was a cause of conflict.

It is a sign of the complete ossification of the Somaliland political landscape, and the extent of the politicisation of the Guurti, that this crisis was only overcome by external mediation by representatives from the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry and the British Embassy in Addis Ababa. A six-point agreement signed on 24 September 2009 included a commitment to further refine the voter list, replace the discredited NEC, and, crucially, agree to a new date for elections based on 'technical rather than political grounds' (Somaliland Times, 2009b). A new review of the registration in November 2009 by British electoral specialists ERIS stated that the previous cleaning had been undertaken under 'extreme time pressure', and sought to emphasise, like Interpeace, that even a perfect system could not have identified all the duplicates in the Somaliland registration, because of the data quality (not assured by adequate technical controls) and the software functionality (slow to process changes) (Mathieson and Wager, 2010:5). NEC had been expecting ERIS to fix the register using new equipment and software procedures (Gaani, interview, 2014; Jimcaale, interview, 2014). Instead, ERIS argued that the existing technology had 'reached its limit' (Mathieson and Wager, 2010), and that in conjunction with AFIS and FRS, the register had to be 'intelligently examined': in other words, reviewed by the human eye (David, personal correspondence, 2013). Two years after the decision to use biometric technology to ensure a database of unique entries, Somaliland's voter register was to be saved by recourse to lo-tech, human-based practices.

Computer stations were thus set up in the NEC headquarters for teams of two people to review records in batches, with between twelve and thirty people working in shifts for twenty-four-hour coverage (Jimcaale, interview, 2014; Mathieson and Wager, 2010:11). NEC also drafted in four 'mothers' to deal with the set of potentially underage registrants, reviewing images to assess age, in a twist on vernacular verification (David, personal correspondence, 2013). This process brought the number of approved records in the register to 1,191,905 (ibid; Mathieson and Wager, 2010:12), removing 1,895 records with fake (digital or photographed) images, 6,493 records of registrants visibly underage, 132 visible duplicates, and 548 repeated registrations (David, personal correspondence, 2013).

Of course, this new phase of cleaning could not undo the massive fraud that had taken place nor salvage the registration process, but it could enable the NEC and Somaliland's electoral stakeholders to move closer to a credible voter list. Electoral commissioner Jimcaale admitted: 'We used them [ERIS] politically – the list had to be saved' (Interview, 2014). Even with ERIS as the public face of the cleaning operation – and hence taking on some of the liability – the pressure to deliver an election in good time in 2010, together with 'server fatigue' meant that the electoral stakeholders had to collectively agree a tolerable stopping

point. ‘Cleaning could not go on forever’, said Jimcaale, ‘so we had to say at one point that it was finished’ (Interview, 2014). There was, of course, no independent data with which to offer the definitive credible number, other than the estimate of 1.1 million voters made by Creative Associates in July 2009 (Grace, 2009), but with advice from ERIS and the new national registrar, appointed in January, the NEC was able to produce an official provisional voter list in May 2010, having tentatively set the election date for 30 June.

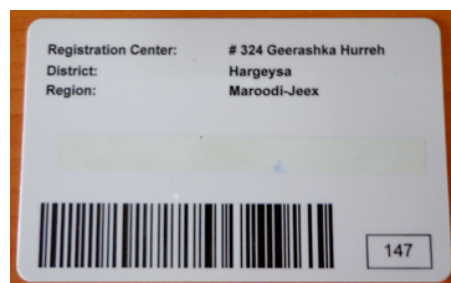
The New Voter Card

In addition to the refinement and production of the registration database, the clean-up process included the production of new ID cards to replace the discredited voter and citizenship ID cards. At a press conference in March, NEC spokesman Ahmed Hirsi Geele said ‘the reason we have changed the previous cards is due to problems and abuses that resulted from the previous registrations. After analysing it we have decided to completely abandon the old ones in order to achieve an election that’s free and fair’ (Hassan, 2010).

Photo 7: The front of the combined national and voter identity card issued in April 2010 in Hargeysa.



Photo 8: The reverse of the combined national and voter card, containing a barcode, and the names of the registration centre, voting district and region.



Source: Anonymously shared, hence details have been redacted.

Voters were told to go to their local display centre (formerly the registration centre), bringing their voter or civil ID card to exchange old for new (NEC, 2010).³⁶ Should they not have either of these cards, they could still claim a new smart card. Voters were checked against three lists (valid records, invalid registrations, and a comparison table explaining the reasons for invalidation): if their registration was found to be invalidated, but their face and name matched the register, they could appeal, completing a verification form and, if approved, be given a validation certificate to be exchanged later for a new card (Mathieson and Wager, 2010:12).³⁷ This was the first time since the initial registration in 2008 that Somalilanders were able to see the results of the drawn-out and heavily politicised process,

³⁶ The display period had been an Interpeace proposal made early in the year to reinvigorate trust in the voter list, and also ensure that problems were minimised on election day – after the events in nearby Kenya in 2008, there was great concern to avoid disappointment or frustration that could spark election-related violence (David, interview, 2013).

³⁷ According to the later ERIS report, over 18,000 such certificates were received, but fewer than 3,000 were finally approved since many contained incorrect or illegible details, were detached from supporting documentation, or could not be uploaded to the main database (Mathieson and Wager, 2010:13–14).

giving a much-needed boost to the scheme’s public credibility. The new distribution also proved a positive step in weeding out duplicates, as the NEC was able to see which cards were collected and to then use this information to update the voter list.³⁸

The 2010 Election and its Aftermath

The Somaliland presidential election was finally held on 26 June 2010, over two years after the end of Riyale’s original term. The poll was clearly won by Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud ‘Silaanyo’, leader of Kulmiye, to whom Riyale conceded once the Supreme Court had validated the results the following month. The election was peaceful and considered relatively free and fair by international observers, who commended the NEC on having implemented voter registration – an oft-repeated recommendation.³⁹ At more than 1,000 polling centres across the country, voters presented their new ID (either brought with them or collected from the polling station) or showed a valid letter signed by the national registrar (validation certificate) authorising voting without a card (Mark, personal correspondence, 2013). Any disputes over someone’s inclusion on the voter list seemed to be resolved, and observers did not record that legitimate voters appeared to have been unable to vote (see, for instance, Walls and Kibble, 2011). However, although reports of multiple voting were much reduced in comparison to previous elections, multiple and underage voting nonetheless still took place, assisted by the distribution of the ‘missing’ ID cards from the display period, and the buying of ID cards for use by party supporters (ibid).

In the final reckoning, the voter turnout of 538,246 was half the figure of the final voter list (see Table 2), with every region showing a discrepancy between the number of registered voters and actual voters. This was particularly so in Sool, Sanaag and Togdheer, the final regions to have been registered and where reports of fraudulent registration were highest. Across the board, there was an almost 50 per cent decrease in the number of voters, most likely a combination of the inflated registration figures and low turnout after the months of delay and disappointment, but it did suggest that the figures were unreliable as a baseline for future election planning or as a demographic indicator of Somaliland’s population. Moreover, in spite of the years of registration, cleaning, political disputes and agreements, the reality was that the voter data was ‘very spoiled’, conceded NEC staff member Farhan (Interview, 2014). ‘The plan was very beautiful but ... if you put in bad data, you get bad results. The people put in bad information but they wanted a perfect list.’

³⁸ There were problems with lost and unprocessed data, however. Almost 124,000 cards were unclaimed and returned to NEC headquarters, although an unknown number of other cards went missing, raising the spectre of future fraudulent voting (Mathieson and Wager, 2010:13).

³⁹ The International Republican Institute, for instance, called the voter register a ‘step forward for the election process’ in its post-election press release (reproduced in Mathieson and Wager, 2010:49–50). See also Kibble and Walls, 2013; Makokha and Ali, 2013; and SONSAF, 2011.

Table 2: Registration numbers and votes cast in Somaliland elections, 2001–12.

Election	Awdal	Maroodi- Jeex	Togdheer	Saaxil	Sanaag*	Sool*	Total [✓]
31 May 2001 referendum [°]	180,473	402,558	224,159	110,406	162,078	103,185	1,182,859
Percentage change between 2001 referendum and 2002 election (%)	-44.32	-53.70	-70.29	-75.33	-67.24	-93.93	-62.80
15 December 2002 local council election [^]	100,495	186,383	66,598	27,234	53,096	6,261	440,067
Percentage change between 2002 and 2003 elections (%)	-34.40	+12.10	+72.77	+12.13	+9.12	+54.96	+13.31
14 April 2003 presidential election [°]	65,930	208,864	115,064	30,537	57,938	9,702	488,543
Percentage change between 2003 and 2005 elections (%)	+101.76	+21.24	+5.81	+71.85	+54.11	+111.88	+37.21
29 September 2005 parliamentary election	133,020	253,229	121,751	52,479	89,286	20,557	670,322
Percentage change between 2005 election and 2009 registration numbers (%)	-0.02	+65.86	+171.05	+14.33	+135.20	NA	+103.36
Interim voter registration results 2009 [×]	133,000	420,000	330,000	60,000	210,000	NA	1,363,192
Percentage change between 2009 and 2010 registration numbers (%)	+33.02	-13.93	-26.30	-28.17	-30.06	NA	-21.51
Final registered voters 2010 [°]	176,916	361,498	243,220	43,096	146,871	98,313	1,069,914
Percentage change between final registration and 2010 election (%)	-54.02	-34.54	-54.09	-32.22	-60.16	-78.76	-49.69
26 June 2010 presidential election [°]	81,338	236,651	111,653	29,211	58,515	20,878	538,246
Percentage change between 2010 and 2012 elections (%)	+40.72	+32.95	+43.71	+95.99	+95.92	+136.53	+50.65
28 November 2012 local council election [°]	114,459	314,663	160,460	57,251	114,642	49,383	810,858

Notes: Compilation and calculations by author; percentages rounded up to two decimal points.

* Voting did not take place in some districts of Sool and Sanaag in all elections.

✓ Total valid votes, not voter turnout. Does not include invalid, blank or disputed votes because information for this is not available for all elections.

° Simkin and Crook, 2002:6.

^ Simkin and Crook, 2002:6; COSONGO, 2002:9. Of the total votes, 440,046 were valid votes (COSONGO, 2002:9). However, note that the GTZ technical report put the number of voters at 453,903 with the number of votes cast at 440,067 (Gers and Valentine-Selsey, 2002:4).

° The total valid votes of the 2005 parliamentary election were 488,035, to which was added a 508-vote national constituency to get a final national vote of 488,543. The 2003 domestic election observers (DEO) report (Abrar, 2003) and the African Elections Database (2010) both put Awdal at 65,930 valid votes, but Abokor et al (2006) reports a figure of 65,934, with the total valid votes at 488,549, indicating an additional discrepancy of 2 votes. For this reason, the DEO/African Elections Database figures are preferred. For an internal regional breakdown for each of the three parties, see Abrar, 2003:12. The total number of votes including invalid/blank votes for which data is available is 498,639, a difference of 10,096, the majority of which occurred in Awdal and Hargeysa (African Elections Database).

× The regional approximations are from Iman, 2009, amounting to 1,153,000 registered voters. The validated figure from ERIS, 2009 is included here as the total.

° African Elections Database, 2010.

° African Elections Database, 2010. Turnout was also estimated at 566,487 according to the Interpeace mission advisor (Mark, personal correspondence, 2013).

° From the Somaliland NEC's official tabulation, courtesy of Aly Verjee.

This ‘bad data’ thus posed problems for the sustainability of the voter register. Although the final voter list had been used relatively successfully in June, it was hopelessly out of date immediately afterwards, if not also at the time of the election (David, interview, 2013). In the two years since the initial registration, deaths and birthdays had all taken place, which had not been recorded on the voter list since the register was not able to draw from complementary data (such as a civil register), but only the one-time process in autumn 2008. In a country with a huge proportion of the population under the age of 18, this meant that young people who had reached the age of majority at the time of the election did not have the documentation to do so.

The White Elephant

Prominent Hargeysa influencers had raised concerns back in May 2009 about the future of the voter database, calling on ‘national concerned institutions to look ahead and start discussing the future custody of the database and the standardisation of the registration process to accommodate new entrants into the voter registration lists’ (Fadal, 2012:17). Just prior to the election, election specialists Creative Associates had cautiously advised that the existing voter registry could be used for the local council elections planned before the end of 2011 (Fischer, 2010). In comparison, ERIS, in its final report in September 2010, argued that the system was obviously designed as a one-shot system, and should not be used again for future registration – both for technical and reputational reasons (Mathieson and Wager, 2010). The different opinions reflected the two firms’ dichotomous positions: Creative Associates, which had been operating in Somaliland for a number of years and whose recommendations had been used to structure and design the voter registration, saw the political advantages (for all sides) in the existing system, though recognised that the political appetite to keep it might be absent. ERIS, which had been brought in to salvage the registration system in 2010 and was more distanced from Somaliland politics, saw the register – and the system that ran it – as inherently flawed and infused with the poor decisions and technical patches of the previous two years.

Evrensel notes that when a voter register deteriorates beyond a certain point, it is easier to start a new one from scratch than attempt to repair the data (2006:23).⁴⁰ The rancour left over from the registration process, together with significant logistical issues, meant that the register had become a white elephant: even apart from the issue of technical sustainability, it had become politically untenable with high ‘integrity’ costs (ibid:18). Moreover, there was neither the political will nor the administrative capacity to maintain the voter list: as the months ticked by after the election, people died whilst others crossed the age of majority, making the list incrementally out of date. However, jettisoning the list was not legally straightforward. The effect of Law No. 37/2007 had been to make voter registration a pre-

⁴⁰ Importantly, it is also commonly easier to raise funds for registration drives than to secure continuous financial support for the infrastructure of registration, meaning that most African countries opt for periodic registrations according to their electoral cycles (Evrensel, 2006:24–26).

requisite for Somaliland elections, a legality that had found further codification in the amendment to Law No. 20-2/2005 (within the first schedule of 2009), which had defined a voter as someone registered at the polling station at which he is to cast his vote (Republic of Somaliland, 2001: Article 5d; Ibrahim, 2010:4). In other words, a legal voter was a registered voter.

Abandoning the Voter Register

The pressure to deliver the long-postponed local council elections as soon as possible resurrected the problem of Somaliland’s early elections: how to conduct voter registration in time for the fast-approaching poll.⁴¹ It was clear that there was not time, political will or crucially donor funding to further clean, maintain or redo the register. Whereas in 2009, the proposal to conduct elections without a voter register had met with sustained opposition, by 2011 the situation was very different. In late 2011, the Somaliland parliament voted to abolish the voter register, passing an amendment to Law No. 37/2007 that voided the 2008 voter list; permitted the holding of the forthcoming local council elections without a voter register; called for a new voter register for subsequent elections; and repealed any contrary provisions in an effort to harmonise the various electoral instruments (SomalilandLaw.com, nd). This was a similar move to that undertaken in 2005 to solve the problem of holding that election without a voter register. This time, however, there *was* a voter register. Moreover, although technical reasons were given for its abandonment, there were clear political advantages to doing so for the long-sitting MPs (in post since 2005) and the president. NEC civil servant Gaani claimed that the NEC was not consulted over the suspension of the voter list, but that it was the result of collusion between the president and parliament to secure term extensions through electoral delay (Interview, 2014). Both bodies did gain extended mandates as a result, lending support to such interpretations.

The voiding of the 2010 voter list meant that the delayed local council elections on 28 November 2012 took place without voter registration. Summarising the responses from a national consultation in early 2012, civil society organisation SONSAF warned that the lack of a voter register for the elections ‘shall lead to increased double or multiple voting, encourage non-national and under-aged voters, tempt organized electoral fraud and ultimately create widespread disputes that can lead to disorder’ (2012:21). SONSAF’s predictions proved remarkably prescient: with the 2010 final voter list sitting in the NEC warehouse in Hargeysa, the safeguard measures of community scrutiny and indelible ink were not able to prevent multiple voting on a wide scale. Though there is no way of knowing how much double voting occurred, the inflation of voter turnout is an indication: as shown

⁴¹ The local council elections had been originally deferred from 2007 to the following year, together with the presidential poll, in order to put in place the voter registration system and the requisite election management procedures. In light of the increasingly high stakes of registration, as well as the repeated electoral delays, the local council elections were postponed indefinitely in order to concentrate on the executive vote. In the years since that initial deferral, the municipal councils had been technically without a mandate, since their term had expired in December 2007, with the Guurti’s six-month extension only bringing the term to the middle of 2008.

in Table 2, voter turnout increased between the 2010 presidential election and the 2012 local council election by around 50 percent nationwide, and by almost 100 percent in the northwestern region of Saaxil.

In Awdal, voter turnout had also increased by around 40 percent, a particularly significant change in light of the violence that broke out over contested polling results in Seylac, a coastal town in Awdal, near the Djiboutian border. As expected in the context of potential electoral and political spoils, this dispute turned on perceptions of clan size and entitlement: the Issa, believing themselves to have a (unverified) majority in the area expected to win key positions on the local council, as a reflection of their traditional stake in the town (Kibble and Walls, 2013; Suleiman, nd). Without credible registration (or, indeed, a census), there was no way to ascertain claims by either the Issa or the Gadabuursi (which in any case would not have changed the votes that had been cast); and no means with which to determine whether the situation had been manipulated by multiple voting. The situation was only resolved by traditional mediation, but it exposed the fragile balance of power in mixed clan constituencies, and demonstrated how competing claims of authenticity and size can have political consequences (APD, 2015:58–60). As in 2005, it was the holding of a heavily politicised and contested election *without* a voter register that re-confirmed the urgent need for one in Somaliland. In the following chapter, I trace how the most recent process of voter registration has endeavoured to address Somaliland’s enduring verification problem.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the efforts of subsequent Somaliland governments to establish a system of voter registration to support the objective of free and fair elections, part of the package of institutions that it is hoped will deliver recognition of Somaliland’s statehood. In many ways, the efforts I have described here signify an extraordinary effort on the part of the Somaliland political elite and public to deliver a vision of a credible modern state. Nevertheless, as this chapter has argued, these schemes have been beset by institutional under-development, political agendas, and the ‘politics of enumeration’ that makes any kind of registration appear as a *de facto* counting of the population (and hence of clan numbers and relative influence). In Somaliland, ‘numbers are politics’, and thus these registration programmes have been deeply politicised as well as highly technical undertakings.

To date, the adoption of biometric technologies has not been the silver bullet that Somaliland’s election managers and donors hoped for. Somaliland’s experiences since 2002 exhibit similar characteristics to projects in other African states during the same period, including overwhelming logistical challenges of unreliable electricity access, operator error and data poverty; and the larger issues of political buy-in. Wrong (2013) has argued that the promise of biometrics to create ‘techno-elections’ are ‘over-sold’ as solutions to enduring

political challenges. Certainly, the Somaliland case shows that the political and legal context of identification is in many ways more important to the success of registration than the technology used to conduct it.

It also demonstrates that ID cards stand and fall by the credibility and neutrality of their verification procedures. In Somaliland, biometric enrolment in 2008 was used to address Somaliland's verification problem, but registration processes repeatedly defaulted to 'traditional' practices, not least in the use of caaqils to authenticate identity. Since these practices can also be defrauded and politicised, however, the draughtsmen of Somaliland's new ID projects will need to find ways of leveraging the benefits of both hi-tech and lo-tech options, without their weaknesses. In the next chapter, I extend these conclusions by examining the new national ID card, a biometric project championed by the Ministry of Interior and Presidency to solve Somaliland's verification problem.

Chapter 6

The Politics of the New National ID Card

Citizens are getting their national ID cards. This is somehow a sign of national pride, since Somaliland is looking for an international recognition (Qasim, personal correspondence, 2014).

The country still remains in a situation of transition, and transition favours the role of tradition (Battera, cited in Balthasar, 2012:216)

I have thus far shown the ways in which the genealogical idiom of clanship interacts with official forms of identification. Though the reliance on the mediated use of genealogy might be a pragmatic solution to the state's myopic sight, it is not without political consequences, as demonstrated by the case of voter registration in Chapter 5. Regardless of the normative dimensions of this issue, from a practical point of view it is clear that clan identity has provided an effective means of situating Somaliland citizens within the field of social identity for both official and non-official purposes.

In this chapter, I examine the most recent addition to Somaliland's emerging official identification system – the much-vaunted 'Smart National Identity Card' – that, after much delay, finally began in September 2015. I look at the way that this project has worked with, and come into competition with, the post-2011 voter registration programme, which aimed to equip Somalilanders with documentation of their eligibility to vote. The national ID card, designed as a symbol of statehood, evidence of nationality, and the basis of a civil register, instead became associated with proving voter eligibility. Fraught debates over which scheme would solve the verification problem for Somaliland's next elections led to an extension of the 'politics of delay' that has characterised Somaliland's electoral history, and the bifurcation rather than consolidation of its nascent identity-management system.

The endurance of Somaliland's verification problem has meant that registration for the national ID card is premised on the incorporation of vernacular practices of verification, including caaqil authentication and self-presentation. In this chapter, I consider how the dependence of official identification upon clan identity reinforces it as a principal socio-political framework of action, meaning and identification, in a way that works to privilege it above other forms of identity. Not everybody feels that their clan identity should be the 'passport' to official identity; and this tension is played out in broader debates about the impact of 'tribalism' in Somaliland politics, and state-building more generally, which I address in the final part of the chapter.

The National ID Debates

After the suspension of the voter list in 2011 and the holding of the fraught local council elections in 2012, it was clear that a new process of voter registration was required. In 2013, the NEC designed its second-generation programme, this time using iris scanning – a learning point from the 2008 registration that fingerprint data is too unreliable in the Somaliland context. With funding agreed from the foreign donors' Democratisation Steering Committee (DSC), the NEC proceeded to draw up plans for a new biometric registration and biometric voter card. In another lesson learned, the NEC undertook a pilot in June 2014 to test the equipment in the field, registering two sets of voters in an urban and rural setting, and then passing a portion of those voters through again to test for duplication (APD, 2014). Although the pilot was relatively limited – testing just 1,062 records, with no disabled or elderly voters (*ibid*) – the data was found to be relatively accurate, with an expert biometrics research team at Notre Dame University able to detect all 457 duplicates (Sandhana, 2014). Although some of the data acquisition encountered problems (such as blurry images or eye disease), the American team leader declared that national registration using the iris technology would mean that 'Somaliland would have the most technically sophisticated voting register in the world' (*ibid*).

Nevertheless, despite these plans for hi-tech registration, a familiar problem remained: how to verify the name, age and nationality of potential voters. The original 2008 voter registration had of course produced separate voter and citizenship ID cards in the form of 'one process, two products' (Farhan, interview, 2014). The production of a citizenship ID card during voter registration was problematic for its credibility as a 'national identity' document. Since it was issued at the same time as the voter ID, it was only given to eligible voters – or rather, voters who turned up to register – meaning around 40 percent of the electorate did not have proof of citizenship.¹ Since registration had not continued beyond January 2009, newly eligible voters (young people who passed the age of majority) did not have either the citizenship or voter card. Additionally, the relative underserving of the eastern regions at election time meant that exactly the contested population that the Somaliland government wished to demarcate as falling under Somaliland citizenship did not have this documentation. When the decision was taken to replace the tainted paper cards with a single plastic card in 2010, the citizenship component had been sutured on, ham-fistedly labelling the card 'national identity – voter identity', even though it was to all extents and purposes a voter card, valid only for elections as a mechanism for voter authentication. Although the card was now made of durable plastic suggesting a long shelf life,² its joint nature meant that since the voter component was delegitimised, the national identity authorisation was too.

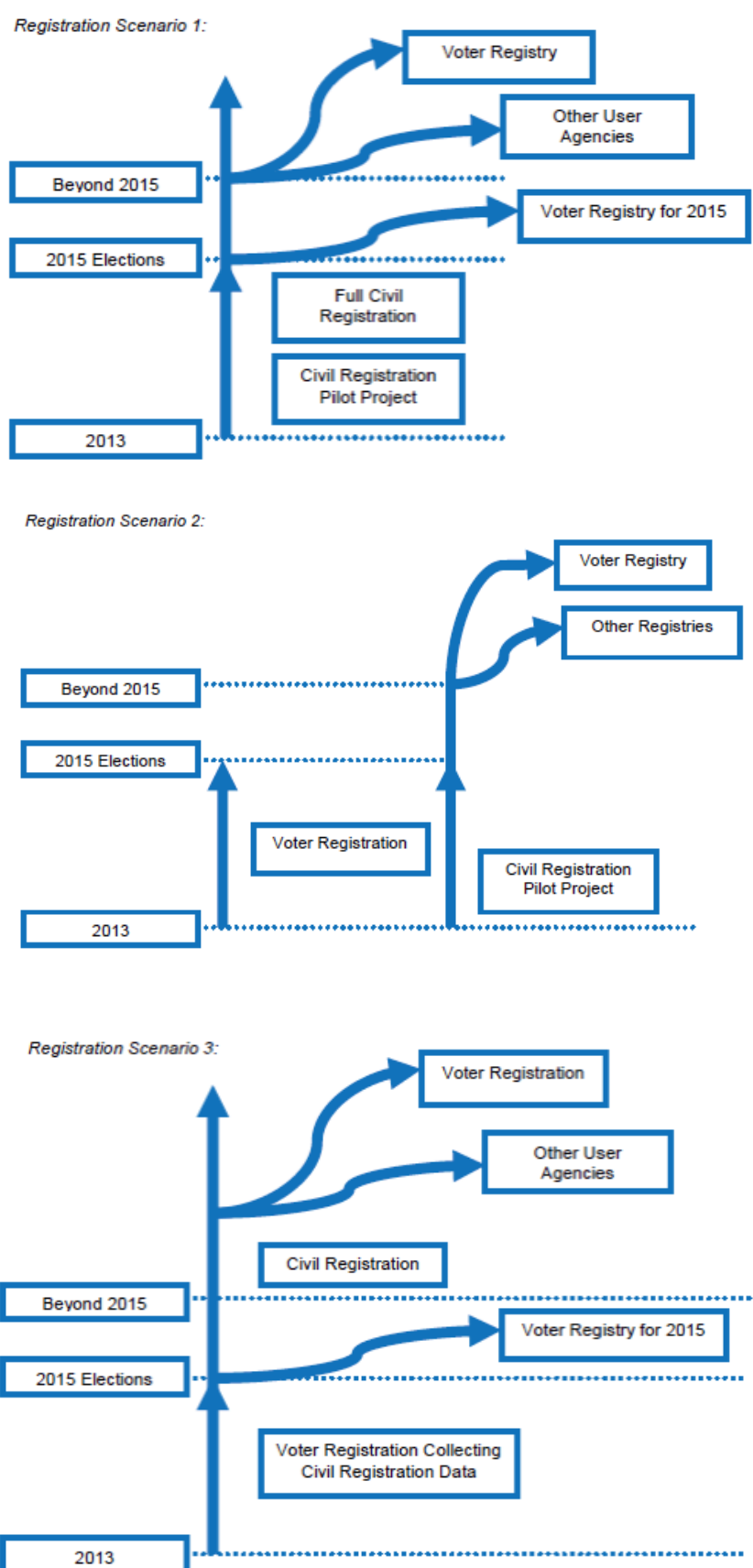
¹ Turnout at previous elections had been estimated at around 60 percent (IRI, 2005).

² The original paper voter card had had three places for 'punching' to show when someone had voted, giving it a lifecycle to match the electoral cycle. The paper citizenship ID card's duration had not been specified in the 2007 voter registration law (Republic of Somaliland, 2007).

Since the 2011 suspension effectively voided the voter cards as legal documents, new national identity documentation was required. However, no new *national* schemes of registration or identification had been rolled out in the interim. Whilst other forms of identification had been initiated or developed in 2013 (specifically smart driver's licenses and e-passports, as discussed in Chapter 4), these did not ascertain citizenship and hence eligibility to vote. Rather, it became clear that if the problem of multiple registrations and duplications in voter registration was to be addressed, the paucity of documentation verifying eligible voters needed to also be solved. In other words, although iris scanning would prevent duplicate registrations, verifying age and nationality had to be done another way. This therefore led to plans to develop a national ID card. As I discussed in Chapter 2, the standard convention is for the production of national ID cards (a functional system) to be sequenced after the establishment of a civil register (the foundational system), so that the identity of the applicant for the ID can be assuredly verified. However, there is no civil register in Somaliland. This chicken-and-egg situation, therefore, in which both ID and a civil register were lacking and yet needed, meant one had to be developed first, and in conjunction with or prior to a voter ID card. How this was to be done led to a difficult period of debate and institutional rivalry as the NEC, supported by the donors, and the MoI, supported by the Presidency, went head-to-head in the years 2013–15.

'Civil' Registration

Although no civil register had been constructed, some planning for civil registration and national documentation did exist. In 2007, the United Nations Development Programme had commissioned US firm Creative Associates to assess the feasibility and potential benefits of a Somaliland national identity card system (Creative Associates, nd.a). However, during the early stages of the 2008 voter registration project – which, of course, contained a citizenship ID card component – donors had begun to revisit the idea of supporting the development of a civil register in Somaliland, a need that had been identified as early as 2001. In February 2009, the British Embassy requested that Creative Associates undertake a second assessment, this time of the MoI's capacity to administer a civil registry and personal identity card programme, and to consider the process in which this capacity and the administration of such a programme could be developed (Creative Associates, nd.b). In May 2010, Jeff Fischer, Creative Associate's senior election adviser, produced a concept paper that extended this analysis and laid out clear recommendations on how to proceed with the development of a civil registry. In particular, Fischer recommended that whilst the NEC would have to continue with voter registration for the intended 2011 local council elections, the MoI was the 'proper institution' for the creation of a sustainable identity infrastructure, and as such the task of national identification needed to be 're-orient[ed]' to it (2010:1).

Figure 3: Proposed civil and voter registration scenarios for Somaliland.

Source: Creative Associates, 2013:7–8.

Fischer (2010) proposed the phased development of a civil register and voter register in order to meet the identification needs of the NEC and the MoI, laying out three scenarios (Figure 3) and recommending the first, which was the option adopted in the 2001 master plan, and which Fischer argued would depoliticise registration whilst still enabling the production of a voter list. Of course, both the government and the donors recognised that a complete, sustainable civil register would take years. Back in 2010, however, there seemed plenty of time for its development and the subsequent generation of the electoral roll for the 2015 presidential elections.³ Preferred scenario 1 would initiate a process known as continuous passive registration, making repeated, periodic voter registration redundant, and improving capacity (and possibly saving money) in the long run (Evrensel, 2006:22). The NEC and MoI therefore agreed to a joint implementation plan in a memorandum of understanding in 2011, having identified five main problems in the form of the lack of civil registration, the lack of a uniform identification system across the country, the lack of a central database for locally issued ID cards, the lack of demographic statistics, and difficulties undertaking anti-criminal and surveillance tasks in light of these challenges (MoU, 2011). The case for putting a civil register in place therefore seemed unambiguous.

ID Card or Voter Card

When I conducted research in Hargeysa in 2013, civil registration seemed to be on the cards. The Ministry of Interior had a unit dedicated to the project, headed by an experienced civil servant who had undertaken this kind of work in the former Republic of Somalia. A draft civil registration law had been produced, and plans appeared to be underway, clearly framed in terms of development goals and improved state functions. When I interviewed Khalid, a senior member of this unit, he shared with me his copy of the report from the Second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, a 2012 conference in Durban, South Africa, which had committed African leaders to reforming and improving civil registration and vital statistics over the period 2010–15 (Interview, 2013). The significance of this system as a symbol of modern governance for Somaliland was clear: Somaliland wanted to be recognised as a ‘proper’ state that would meet the commitments expressed in that document to have a fully-functioning civil registration system.

However, over the course of 2013, the wind changed. The open-ended, long-term process of civil registration was not regarded as delivering security and assurance (and political windfalls) in the face of what would be a crucial presidential election in 2015. The Somaliland Presidency and Ministry of Interior thus backtracked on the dual-track process in late 2013 and sought to adapt the Creative Associates master plan. In early 2014, the MoI

³ Fischer’s report (2010) had envisioned that preparation and planning would take place in 2011–12, with piloting in the summer of 2012, followed by a two-year programme during 2012–13.

embarked on a programme that, whilst called ‘civil registration’, was in reality an ID card scheme, the ‘Somaliland Smart National Identity Card’ (SLSID, nd).⁴

The card was billed as a multipurpose smart card, with a number of proposed functionalities including ‘amongst other things, a reliable system of uniquely authenticating and verifying the identity of every citizen’s individual [sic], improve national security through efficient and reliable identity authentication, promote consumer credit and minimize identity fraud’ (Ministry of Interior, 2014:1; Somali Diaspora News, 2014). Whilst public narratives therefore emphasised the ‘national identity’ element of the card, it became overtly linked to elections in official discourse, prominently demonstrated by the March 2014 presidential decree which stated that civil registration was central to voter registration and ‘necessary to ensure that only the citizens of Somaliland vote’ (Republic of Somaliland, 2014a: preamble; my translation).

The associated register that the ID scheme was going to produce, however, was only of citizens who had come voluntarily to register, and it was not clear how this was going to be connected to a more conventional civil register in order to create the kind of system of administrative oversight that the government had said it wanted. Over the summer of 2014, it emerged that the view at the MoI was that every eligible voter should have a national ID card in order to register, thus eviscerating the functionality of the voter ID card (since the national ID card could be used instead). The government used the legislative vacuum posed by the need for a new voter registration law (repealed in 2011) to manipulate the sequencing of the two registrations. The draft voter registration law had been stuck in the parliamentary queue for months, whilst the existing draft of the civil registration act had been written for a civil register rather than the national ID cards and so had never made it to the agenda of the House of Representatives (Haybe, interview, 2014; Khalid, interview, 2013; translated by Tawfiq). In August 2014, the MoI therefore drafted a combined voter and civil registration bill, stipulating that the national ID card would be compulsory for voter registration (Haybe, interview, 2014).⁵ The dual-track process agreed in 2011 (Scenario 1, Figure 3) had meant that voter registration was supposed to be completed on a schedule to match the election cycle (pre-2015), whereas civil registration could take as long as necessary. This new joint law had the effect of putting the national ID card on course to be completed not only on a similar timeline, but in fact more quickly, despite the elections being less than a year away. This brought back a version of the sequenced registrations, but did not obviate the repetition this created: Somaliland would have two processes of registration of the voting-age population, with biometric data capture and the production of photo ID cards, with both cards being necessary for voting, just that the ‘civil’ registration would come first.

⁴ In this chapter, I use the term ‘national ID card’, to distinguish it from the voter card and citizenship card of Chapter 5.

⁵ The joint law was gazetted in January 2015 and then corrected in May 2015 to address unclear passages and typographical errors. There is very little elucidation of the national ID card/civil registration component in this law. Instead, this was done in regulations dated 8 August 2014 and the taskforce decrees of 20 March 2014 (Republic of Somaliland, 2014a).

This seemed to be another example of the ‘technopolitics’ (Hecht, 2009) of registration that characterised the 2008–10 voter registration, whereby technical processes were being used as a foil for political machinations. This opened up considerable debate, with the opposition parties questioning the government’s decision to register only the voting-age public, arguing that if it was to be a national ID card, all citizens should have the paperwork (Gulaid, interview, 2014a). In part this was a problem of the divergence from civil registration, which would have provided birth certificates and hence some form of documentation for all citizens. A senior Waddani representative argued that it was a contradiction for the government to say that the card was to know ‘who is a Somalilander’, whilst only giving the card to those eligible to vote (ibid). Another senior Waddani member complained: ‘why do they [the government] want ID? It is simply to create problems for the voter registration and the election’ (Tarabi, interview, 2014). Likewise NEC’s legal advisor complained, ‘It’s all about delaying tactics. It’s all about politics and it’s all about playing games’ (Haybe, interview, 2014).

The spectre of a return to the politics of delay that characterised the 2007–09 period created considerable concern amongst the opposition parties, and they saw the national ID card as a symbol of the government’s entrenchment. In turn, pro-government media criticised the card’s opponents in nationalist terms: ‘Why are they refusing national IDs?’, an article in the pro-state *Horn Tribune* asked. ‘By denying the populace to have their personal indices registered is to deny the essence of nationhood, statehood or our whole essence of Somaliland’ (Horn Tribune, 2014). Waddani retorted that they were not against the card itself, seeing this as an important development for Somaliland, but that, as Gulaid, a senior party member, put it, planning civil registration without the legal framework, and ID cards without a civil register, was like ‘a driver at midnight with no lights on the highway with no map’ (Interview, 2014a).

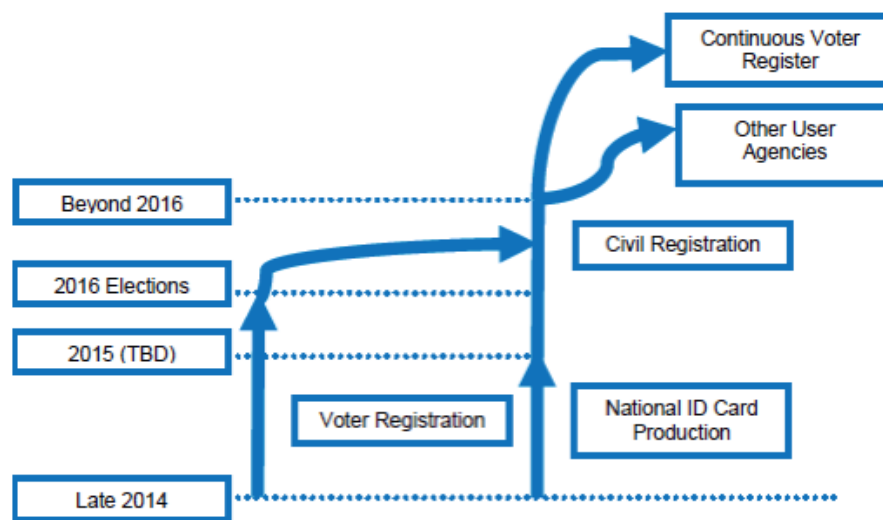
Just as in previous years, these debates took up enormous political energy, with the opposition arguing that the holding of elections was now dependent upon voter registration, which was in turn dependent upon the production of the national ID cards, which made delay (and term extensions) inevitable (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). This was particularly so since the new draft voter-civil registration law had resurrected the ‘idle six-months’ clause (Waddani, 2014), meaning that voter registration would have to take place six months before an election.⁶ It could not begin before December 2014 (six months before the June 2015 elections), however, since the prior national ID card scheme would not be complete by then. This was a real conundrum, posed, again, by Somaliland’s fundamental verification

⁶ In his 2009 report for Creative Associates, Jeffrey Grace had expressed surprise in its review that the voter list was being prepared so far in advance (two months before the election date), whereas in similar post-conflict or new state contexts (such as East Timor and Bosnia and Herzegovina), it is typically prepared three days before, to ensure it is up to date with no possibility of tampering (Grace, 2009:3). But in Somaliland, the months of delay, distrust and disagreement made an early phase of review necessary to reassure all election stakeholders that a credible list could be produced in time. After the problems of the 2008–10 registration, this was arguably even more pertinent, even though it risked making the list out of date by the time of the election unless sufficient opportunities for review and amendment were made.

problem since the state did not have alternative means of vetting applicants for the ID project in order to then provide the means for verifying voters. In the end, pragmatism won the day.

The stand-off over voter registration was finally defused by two agonisingly negotiated amendments to the draft bill, meaning voter registration was to take place *within* six months of the election, and the national ID card would be essential but not compulsory (Haybe, interview, 2014; Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014).⁷ This essentially brought the NEC and the MoI back to the dual-track process of 2013, but along a new timeline (Figure 4), with implications for planning, procurement and implementation, leading inevitably to new delay.

Figure 4: Planned integration of national ID, voter and civil registration in Somaliland.



Source: My illustration, adapted from Creative Associates, 2013.

A Symbol of Statehood

Despite the case for civil registration that had been agreed in 2011, the national ID card was therefore seen as the favoured project. It offered the Somaliland state a much more powerful tool in the construction of official legitimacy – an artefact of Somaliland’s stateness – than a civil register. By creating a tangible token emblazoned with the name ‘Republic of Somaliland’, the national identity card had an important state-building and ‘PR’ function. The development of Somaliland’s first national identity card since the proclamation of independence in 1991 is therefore intimately connected to its campaign for recognition. Civil servant Qasim wrote to me in late 2014, exclaiming ‘Citizens are getting their national ID cards. This is somehow a sign of national pride, since Somaliland is looking for an international recognition’ (Personal correspondence, 2014). The new card therefore appears as a totem of Somaliland’s existence in the face of repeated failures to woo the international

⁷ Whilst the smart card would be asked for, should not all citizens hold it by the time of the election, MoI officials would confirm citizenship at voter registration centres (a tacit reversion to the 2008 practice).

community over the country's *de jure* status; 'to mark out a different idea of Somaliland', claimed President Silaanyo in November 2014 (Mareeg Media, 2014; my translation). The escalation of violent secessionist politics in the Taleex region in recent years, together with the ever-present threat of skirmishes along the Puntland border, and the periodic vocalisation of frustration within the Awdal region against Isaaq domination, suggests delineating Somalilandness is politically essential. Indeed, a 'testimonial' from the former Minister of Interior Ali Mohamed Warancadde on the card's website stated that 'the nationality identity cards would be offered to the utmost nationals' (SLSID, nd). The card therefore offers the possibility of strongly demarcating Somalilanders and reinforcing the authenticity narrative that is implicit in Somaliland's genealogical citizenship. In this sense, the card is a clear device for 'legibility', wherein Somaliland citizens (nationals) can be distinguished and demarcated from non-Somalilanders by a tangible artefact of statehood that serves to represent, instantiate and verify the existence of Somaliland as a state with a definite, discrete and narrated population.

When I visited Hargeysa in 2014, the rationalisation of the scheme to enable the identification of Somalilanders, and create a technology that is a hallmark of the modern state, was part of the narrative on the radio and in newspapers, and taken up in the teashops, streets and mosques where Somalis 'talk politics'. Saadaq, for instance, a driver of one of the new small taxis in Hargeysa, saw the card as being a distinctive token of Somalilandness: 'how do people know who is from here?' he asked (Interview, 2014). 'They will know you are a Somaliland person if you have an ID card. If you have that card you don't need anything else.' And he added a further advantage of the card in terms of the quest for recognition: 'It makes it easier for international recognition. When they see your ID card they will recognise your country' (ibid).

Saadaq's view found public voice in the Somaliland press and diaspora websites. Just prior to the late September 2014 launch of the card, an op-ed in *Somaliland Press* argued that:

We have to Recognise ourselves through an official ID documents which In turn could facilitate expediting an automatic recognition [from] the larger world communities. ... How can we or the international community will identify or differentiate between Somalilanders and other Somali speaking regions if we do not possess standard identification paperwork similar to the ID documents owned by other nationals of any other country on the planet if you don't have or carry your identity with you. We must implement the proposed national ID registration initiatives without delay in order to show the world our unique identity i.e. who we are and where we are from. (Ahmed, 2014)

The author thus framed his support for the project in three interrelated ways: as a pathway to international recognition, as a way to distinguish Somaliland nationals from Somalis, and as a means to provide 'standard' paperwork, referencing the powerful idea that identification papers are simply what citizens have, and that to be a formal state, Somaliland citizens must have these too. When I asked people why the national ID card was necessary or important, they often responded with these kinds of tropes. For instance, Kulane, a

construction worker living in north Hargeysa, told me that although he did not know much about the new scheme, he welcomed an ID that ‘said Somaliland, because I am from Somaliland’ (Interview, 2014; translated by Ashkir). Kulane indexed the idea of the card as artefact of Somaliland’s existence, a sentiment also expressed about the voter ID card back in 2008. My interlocutors were sometimes surprised by the question, pointing out that I had official ID from the UK, so they should similarly have ID from Somaliland. ‘We have every right to be a nation!’ declared Qays, a senior official working on civil registration, when discussing the lack of international funding for the national ID card (Interview, 2014). Similarly, Obsiye, a young man I interviewed who had worked on the 2008 voter registration, argued that ‘Every nation has civic ID – every nation has it. It is very important’ (Interview, 2014).

Biometric Nationalism

Great optimism for the recognition of Somaliland’s statehood is therefore clearly inscribed in the national ID card project, which is a symbol of its ambition for sovereignty. And yet the desire to quickly and effectively orchestrate an entire identity infrastructure that puts the state at the centre of a new system of verification has been complicated by the importance of voter and civil registration, championed by foreign donors, to which the national ID card scheme has stood in uncomfortable juxtaposition. In the face of the internationally sponsored voter card, the Ministry of Interior has determinedly developed its own project. Indeed, the positioning of the smart card has been very much in terms of a nationalist narrative of self-reliance, drawing on the ‘founding myth’ of Somaliland that it has rebuilt the state on its own via indigenous means of consensus and traditional institutions, despite the international community’s cold shoulder. With voter registration being funded and supported by the DSC, the positioning of the identity card as essential to nationhood was a form of technopolitics in which the administrative-technical undertaking of registration became a cipher for political goals.

This nationalistic politics has been played out in the dispute with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) over civil registration, and the nature of the tender and procurement process for the national ID card. The IOM had secured funding in the 2012/13 period to support civil-registration capacity-building at the MoI, and to develop a pilot scheme with a small ID-card component (Cosoble, interview, 2014; John, interview, 2014). However, when the government chose to prioritise ID cards, the IOM balked at supporting the scheme, arguing that the money was earmarked for civil registration (ibid). The line from the Somaliland government, however, was that the international community would not pay for Somaliland’s national ID cards because it would be ‘tantamount to recognition’ (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). This was refuted by IOM’s man on the ground, who pointed out that the original programme had included a small ID card component, and thus the donors could not be ideologically opposed to ID cards for Somaliland (John, interview,

2014). However, with the DSC's continued support for voter registration set against the embargo on using the civil registration equipment, the narrative of international opposition to the project persisted, with repercussions for attitudes towards the DSC. For instance, a civil registration taskforce member told me: 'I have got a lot of pain when I hear that the donors are not wanting to support the ID card. That is really wrongdoing. They are guilty! I will not forgive them forever' (Qays, interview, 2014).

In response, the government was able to position itself as providing an essential national programme of which it would be the sole funder, thus propounding a narrative of self-sufficiency. Biometric data is integral to this account. Somaliland policymakers had a choice between developing basic paper-based biometric or advanced 'smart' cards, and chose the latter, confirmed senior MoI official Abdullahi (Interview, 2014). Moreover, whereas the voter card was to utilise iris recognition, the MoI chose a triumvirate of iris, fingerprint and facial recognition. This was framed as a decision explicitly taken to 'avoid the mistakes' of six years before, said Dahir, a senior civil servant and member of the civil registration taskforce (Interview, 2014), but it ignored the logistical, triangulation and storage challenges of so much data, and hence why the NEC had streamlined the biometric system for voter registration (Farhan, interview, 2014). The decision suggests the technical ambition of the MoI scheme, and also a silver-bullet belief in biometrics as able to deliver advanced official identification in Somaliland by using citizens' bodies to solve the verification problem. Like the 2008 voter registration project, technology appeared to be seen as an antidote to fractious political relations and weak institutional procedures.

Tender Politics

The new policy meant that new procurement was needed, since sophisticated scanners were now required. Donor procurement rules meant that the generators, scanners and printers, laptop and desktop computers, servers and software already procured by the IOM for civil registration and by the NEC for voter registration could not be used, according to Daleel, a member of the civil registration team at the Ministry of Interior (Interview, 2014). These therefore sat gathering dust in the civil registration unit at the MoI whilst procurement began for the 'civil' registration (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). Putting together the request for proposals (RFP) was challenging however. Like the tender process for the 2008 voter registration, much was underspecified and vague, and the timeline was short and ambitious. 'The RFP preparation was not so easy', MoI official Abdullahi admitted. 'We didn't have time to hire technical experts' (Interview, 2014). Companies from the US, Australia, Europe and Asia applied, but each was rejected on grounds of expense: some companies suggested extremely expensive (though, admitted a member of the civil registration taskforce,⁸ more effective) systems; others included huge security costs for working in what is internationally

⁸ The taskforce was set up in early 2014 to oversee the ID card's development and subsequently the civil register, in conjunction with a steering committee (Republic of Somaliland, 2014a).

regarded as Somalia – a high-risk country (Dahir, interview, 2014). ‘Most of them were afraid of Somaliland. They were thinking there were a lot of problems, so they were putting a lot of cost for security. The price was double or triple’ (ibid). Instead, a Somaliland company, Sahal Technical Solutions, was appointed, composed of IT and business administration graduates from Somaliland universities. Salow, a graduate of Hargeysa university and technical manager of the company, told me that they outdid the international companies by having ‘local expertise and knowledge, people who know the environment’ (Interview, 2014).

Apart from the fact that using locals obviated expensive security and logistical arrangements, there appeared to be a strong undercurrent in favour of a national company winning the bid. A member of the civil registration taskforce told me it was ‘fortunate’ that a Somaliland company had won the tender (Dahir, interview, 2014). ‘This project belongs to Somaliland’, he explained. ‘The funding is from the Somaliland government, the expertise is from Somalilanders, the company is from Somaliland. The previous voter registration did not belong to Somaliland – it belonged to Interpeace.’ Privately civil servants and researchers expressed suspicion over the awarding of the contract, with the UCID leader Jamal Ali Hussein reportedly describing it as ‘naked corruption’ (Abdirahman, 2014). Although at the time of writing it was too early to tell what the implications of hiring an untested, inexperienced local firm would be for the national ID card project, it seemed as if the cart of political decisions (in the name of nationalist politics) had been put before the horse of technical expertise, suggesting that the lessons of 2008 had not been adequately learned, and the process was again to be haphazard and rushed.

The Verification Problem, Again

Despite the expensive biometrics, another problem with the national ID card became apparent during the planning stage. Although the biometric filters would be able to ensure that each person enrolled only once, applicants still did not have a way of proving their identity. The national ID card therefore faced the same verification problem that it had purported to solve for voter registration. The Somaliland state therefore had to draw on the vernacular verification practices that I described in Chapters 3 and 4, in particular caaqil authentication, undermining the vision of panopticism that the programme implies. Rather, the legibility of the Somaliland population remains within the genealogical idiom, with caaqils as gatekeepers of authenticity and readers of identity.

When I conducted my final interviews in the summer of 2014, the plan was for each national ID card centre to have three staff: a data entry officer, a centre administrator, and a court official to administer an oath. The centre administrator would be responsible for

verification, asking, in the first instance, for the name of the registrant's caaqil.⁹ Here again, the local, informal and contextual knowledge of clan elders was thus called upon to enable the state to 'see' – an invocation of 'metic legibility' in the guise of 'official legibility'. Dahir, a member of the civil registration taskforce, claimed that this was necessary because 'the traditional structure of Somaliland already identifies which person is a Somalilander. Ninety-nine per cent of people are covered by this' (Interview, 2014).

This single question about a person's caaqil is supposed to activate a number of layers of information. 'When he mentions the caaqil, he also mentions the clan', said Dahir (ibid). Should the applicant not be known, or his identity suspect, the administrator is supposed to ask follow-up questions, such as the structure of the sub-clan, the name of the caaqil's father's father (the chief caaqil at the time of independence) or the way in which the tribe pays the *mag* (ibid). Dahir claimed that each administrator would be equipped with knowledge of the relevant sub-clans in the area of the registration centre so as to be able to assess the veracity of the information supplied by the applicant. Failing this, the administrator would be able to call upon one of the 200 chief caaqils recruited by the MoI: these are caaqils whose father and grandfather were also caaqils ('not the people who just put on the hat', Dahir said), who know at least the clan structure if not the individuals (ibid). It was planned that two caaqils would be in every registration centre to assess citizenship and age. However, because sometimes an caaqil would not be present (for instance, because of clan business), or because someone might seek to register in a place where their lineage was not known by the resident caaqil, the chiefs could also be called to attend to a particular case.

Although this thesis does not cover the actual registration process of the national ID card, reports from Somaliland suggest that clan identity is indeed being used as the principal means of identification. Researcher Ridwan Osman, for instance, said that when he applied for the card at the start of 2015, he was asked directly about his clan and the name of his chief caaqil (University of Oxford, 2015). He said that the name was checked against a long list, after which the application process began. Genealogical situatedness – what Dahir termed Somaliland's 'tree structure' – has therefore apparently been placed at the heart of the new registration process, in an effort to resolve the verification problem.

⁹ It is worth noting that the draft amendments to the voter registration law proposed in the autumn of 2014 stated that citizenship for civil registration could be confirmed by 'a Sultan, Aqil (Chief), members of the two Houses of Parliament, local councils, heads of villages, business people of the district or the Imam of the village' (Republic of Somaliland, 2014b: Article 17.1). The representative would swear an oath before a court official and, thus being confirmed, the citizen would receive their ID card. Those unable to be certified by the named individuals would need to bring with them a guarantor (a well-known person with immovable property in the district) to certify that the individual is a citizen (ibid: Article 18.4). There was no mention of using existing or other forms of documentation to prove citizenship, such as a passport or MoI citizenship certificate, even though the former was being revised to be more secure and reliable at the time of the drafting of the new registration legislation, and the latter used the same verification approach.

Graduated Citizenship

As I argued in Chapter 3 though, not everyone in Somaliland has legibility under the genealogical idiom. It assumes unity and relativity in a national family tree, but in at least the cases of the Gabooye and *garacyo*, some people face extreme stigma and difficulty when it comes to identifying themselves via lineage. Continuing to draw on clan identity as the basis of verification for official identity reinforces these power-laden narratives of authenticity and exclusion, which perpetuates a system of graduated citizenship in Somaliland (Migdal, 2006; see also Bezabeh, 2011). It is not clear whether these ideational barriers will affect the ability of marginalised groups of people to claim the national ID card, but in my interviews with government officials, there seemed to be a formal confidence that all Somalilanders would be included (Dahir, interview, 2014; Abdullahi, interview, 2014). ‘Whether you are a majority or a minority, you have an caaqil’, argued a senior MoI official (Daleel, interview, 2014; translated by Rooble).

Utilising lineage as the marker of citizenship also impedes the extension of naturalised citizenship in Somaliland. As I explained in Chapter 4, there is a provision for naturalisation in the Somaliland constitution and the 2002 citizenship law, but *jus sanguinis* dominates conceptions of citizenship. Naturalisation appears to be infrequent and difficult. If the national ID card is to act as a ‘breeder document’ for other forms of documentation, including those that recognise citizenship, it seems important that consideration be given to whether those seeking naturalisation will be able to apply for the national ID as a first step to citizenship. However, if this process necessitates having a relationship to a local clan that can be authenticated, it seems challenging if not impossible for long-term residents that are not from Somaliland’s clans to become a citizen and gain a national ID card.

The members of the civil registration taskforce I interviewed did not seem concerned that any Somalilander would fall through the gaps of this system nor that the system was open to fraud. They also did not want to engage with the question of naturalisation. For instance, MoI official Abdullahi declared: ‘the Ethiopians that live here and southerner Somalis, they are not going to take the ID card: they have a country’ (Interview, 2014). This official line critically overlooks the importance of documentation to these two groups of people living in Somaliland. It also demonstrates the strength of the hegemonic narrative of authenticity that I described in Chapter 3.

Bringing ‘Tradition’ and ‘Modernity’ Together

It is clear from the above that the current Somaliland government perceives the ongoing dependence on caaqil authentication as a pragmatic adaptation whilst the identity-management infrastructure is augmented via biometric registration. My interlocutors, who acknowledged the drawbacks of the current official systems, and the relative predictability of vernacular practices, also echoed this explanation. ‘If we didn’t have them [caaqils], what

would happen?’ asked Dacaa, a civil society leader. ‘There would be more mistakes if we didn’t have them’ (Interview, 2014)

However, as I have argued in the rest of this thesis, and as the responses above about the question of naturalisation show, the image of authentic Somalilandness is a strong underlying justification for using caaqils and clan identity as the basis for verification. It is also part of an ongoing debate in Somaliland about the desirability of the hybridity of ‘traditional’ and clan-based institutions, norms and processes, and those of the ‘modern’ state. Projects such as the national ID card exhibit a tension between needing to utilise the whole range of resources provided by clan institutions and wanting to ‘develop’ like other states. ‘Without ID, no one can survive’, the head of the ID project at the MoI asserted (Daleel, interview, 2014; translated by Rooble), emphasising the modern credentials of the new system, whilst protocols were put in place to incorporate clan vouching.

The issue about how ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ approaches are blended together, and the desirability of this synthesis, finds expression in quotidian discussions about *qabiilism* (tribalism) in political and public life, such as the extent of nepotism in public appointments and the prospect of fair competition in the multi-party elections. Editorials in online and print news outlets regularly raise these issues, typically drawing on a shared vocabulary of motifs. For instance, in an article for *Somaliland Press* entitled ‘The Challenges of Tribalism’ in December 2017, the author railed:

Tribalism is responsible for underdevelopment, corruption, the rigging of elections and violence. In Somaliland context, it is indeed a major stumbling block to democracy as well as socioeconomic development. ... We, the Somalilanders, should always have in mind that the most significant thing is to present the public security and integrity of our masses and bringing our nation ahead. Therefore, we need to wipe out this evil and make the country for all Somalilander (Abdiqani, 2015).

Such commentaries reflect concerns about the ‘tribalistic’ character of Somaliland’s political parties (Ahmed-Yasin, 2012; Abirahman, 2015), and the ‘stirring up of tribal emotions’ in the public media (Somaliland Press, 2012); captured in deliberations about whether land disputes in Hargeysa will be resolved by the courts or clan leaders (Somaliland Press, 2016), and whether the Silaanyo administration has fostered or eradicated the political leverage of clan leaders (for instance, compare Ahmed, 2013 and Yusuf, 2013). Debates about the election of the Guurti and parliamentary quotas for women and Gabooye similarly evoke questions about to what extent Somaliland politics should be shaped by clannish or democratic principles, and whether hybrid governance remains appropriate.¹⁰

¹⁰ On the women’s quota, see Elder, 2013; Ismail, 2014; Nagaad Network, nd; Riordan, 2015. On the Gabooye quota, see Yusuf, 2014. On the Guurti as an elected or nominated body, see Abokor et al, 2006; and IRIN, 2013.

‘Traditional’ Identification

During my fieldwork, these issues often animated public discussions in teashops, or private conversations between friends and colleagues (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2012–14). They show that the identity architecture that I have theorised in this thesis is not merely a heuristic concept, but refers to the assemblage of norms and practices that is part of the broader landscape of hybridity in Somaliland. Discussions about verification and identification in Somaliland are therefore structured by assumptions about how this architecture is manifested and understood, in particular the degree to which vernacular practices should be formally integrated into the official system.

We can see this playing out in the formulation of the national ID card in 2014. Amongst the technocrats of the newly formed Civil Registration Task Force, the appointment of former senior politician Qays stood out. Not only was he the only ‘independent’ member, but he is an outspoken proponent of basing the state’s identification system on genealogy, specifically the structure of *mag*-paying groups headed by the *caaqil*, and including that information explicitly on the card and within the accompanying database.

Qays has argued that the way to mitigate fraud in future Somaliland ID schemes is to explicitly base the process in what he calls ‘TI’ (traditional identification). Noting that each *caaqil* knows the number of males, and laterally females, within the *mag*-paying group, the Ministry of Interior should, he proposed, create a spreadsheet with ‘columns for the name of the citizen (in seven genealogical names instead of four), age, and his address’, which each *caaqil* should complete within a period of two months (see also Daud, 2013). The resulting national database, he argued, would create a ‘complete and comprehensive ancestral tree ... for every citizen, with absence of alien machinery and expensive technology’ (ibid). Traditional identification would therefore take the place of the ‘decorative and international practice’ of biometric data (ibid).

When I met him in August 2014, Qays had an impressive digital genealogy-mapping tool, which he demonstrated on his Samsung smartphone. Drawing on British genealogical records, it included the clan lineages of the Gabooye (excluded by the British)¹¹ and the eponymous paternal generations since the British Protectorate. A simple tree-based diagram, he could follow descent all the way from the named fathers through twenty junctions to the present day. Qays boasted that by using this technology he could map the genealogy of any person, and did so using my research assistant Rooble as an example:

Here is Somaliland, when I click over there I get the names: this is Issa, this Isaaq, this is Samaroon, this is Darood. Here are Samaroon, they have thirty-seven diya-paying groups; here are Isaaq, they have 207 diya-paying groups. So now I am going to Rooble. Rooble belongs to Isaaq, so I [am] clicking to Isaaq. Here are all these guys [sons]. Then I go Habar Awal, then I go Zubeer. Zubeer has got 63 diya-paying groups – so I know all these numbers. Zubeer is the only son of Awal. Zubeer’s only

¹¹ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of Gabooye lineages.

son was Muse. I am also Muse, I belong to same family as him. We are common up to him. Now Muse had six sons. I belong to this guy, Sacad. Rooble belongs to Cisse. Cisse has got four sons. Rooble belongs to Maxamed. So I go here, Maxamed has two sons only, Hassan and Jibril. I think he is Jibril. Ok, Jibril has got Omar, Abokor, Muse and Yunis. He is Muse. Muse has got two children: Abdirahman and Abdullah. He is Abdullah definitely. Then Abdullah has got Xasan and Abdullah. Abdullah has got 10 fathers; his number is HA61, which means he is Habar Awal with 61 diya-paying groups, so [it is a] four-digit number. From Abdullah up to Sheikh Isaaq it is ten fathers. Then we are Rooble Ahmed, his names – he has got another nine including him. (Interview, 2014)¹²

This was a technical demonstration of the *abtirsiino*, the naming of the fathers, that is at the heart of the practices of verification and vouching that I described in Chapter 3 (see also Figure 1). With a few clicks and a variation of the one question ‘yaad ka sii tahay?’ (‘who are you [within that group]?’), Qays was able to accurately trace and visualise Rooble’s lineage.

This mapping was part of a coding system that Qays had developed, in which each person could be assigned a four-digit number that included the name of his or her clan and the number of *mag*-paying groups within that clan (for instance, HA61). These are, he stated simply, people’s addresses (or postcodes). ‘My address now is [the *mag*-paying group] and the number of Habar Awal joined together. So if my card is lost in the street, it can be returned immediately because my *mag*-paying group is a unique number so they can come to my chief and say “do you know him?” because every day he is collecting money, the subscriptions. There is no need to go to the police’ (Qays, interview, 2014). Qays hence explicitly acknowledged the centrality of clan life, particularly the vibrant networks that transmit trust, obligation and favour, to identification and verification in Somaliland, and advocated for them to be integrated fully into the national identity scheme.¹³

Qays’ efforts to modernise the *abtirsiino* as a form of official identity verification suggest that the genealogical idiom is not ‘traditional’ but a custom that continues to have meaning and utility in the present (Hobsbawm, 1983:2). Rather than seeing it as either antiquated or a critique of modernity, the use of genealogy in Somaliland’s official state practices appears to reflect adaptation and flexibility, drawing on available resources in a context of institutional weakness, under-funding and development. We might imagine how such a tool would enable the genealogical gatekeeping of the *caaqils* to be democratised: everyone could have such software on their phones, and be able to trace lineages for themselves.

At the same time, of course, the map that Qays has created has another implication: the codification and validation of clan lineage as the principal form of identity in Somaliland. As I noted in Chapter 4, the stabilisation of clan relations in genealogical trees was a colonial tool of legibility, ignoring the essential dynamism of clan relations in which genealogical

¹² Note that although I use ‘*mag*’ in the thesis, Qays used ‘*diya*’ and so I have retained this usage in the quotation.

¹³ Interestingly, Ruggiero (2001:195) notes that a similar idea using a personal number to create a ‘national book of personality’ was an influential suggestion in 1930s Argentina. This is of course the basis of national insurance/social security numbers, and personal identity numbers, such as the Indian Aardhaar scheme. See World Bank, 2014:33–34 for a discussion of the advantages and drawbacks of unique identification numbers.

proximity and distance were shaped by marital alliance and treaty. Size not genealogical hierarchy defines clan segmentation, meaning junctures in the line of descent are not necessarily equivalent across clans (Lewis, 1994; see also Djama, 2010). Advocating the use of the *abtirsiino* as a form of identification thus brings to the fore the authenticity inequities that I discussed in Chapter 3. Moreover, the ‘reading’ of clan lineages to prove a person’s identity makes genealogy the principal marker of belonging, excluding those who cannot situate themselves in these biographical texts, and risking the basing of ‘official identity’ in essentialised categories.

Indeed, Qays had been defeated in his efforts to have his software incorporated into the ‘civil registration’ by inscribing the national ID card with the *caaqil*’s name or the relevant code. ‘My opponents said it would lead to segregation – that if tribe is written on the card, it could harm you. I say [to them] “I know your group. Have I ever harmed you?”’ (Interview, 2014)¹⁴ Whilst the obvious case of Rwanda was not mentioned by any of my interlocutors in our discussions about clan identification, it does serve as a cautionary tale, as Qays implies here. Although Qays’ idea may have been rejected, its underlying recognition that the norms of ‘tradition’ shape and influence the construction of authentic belonging in Somaliland endures. Moreover, Qays is not the only person I encountered to acknowledge that the relationship between clan and official identity is still being imagined and negotiated, as I explain in the following section.

‘Already We Know Each Other’

As I have noted in other chapters, fluency in navigating the ‘traditional’ networks is determined by lineage, contemporary status and the fungibility of contacts. The chain of connections that people activate to access guarantees, surety and support may be longer or shorter depending upon these factors. ‘Knowing’ other people is backgrounded by configurations of trust and obligation, which derive from the clan system. This ‘knowing’ is a form of legibility: it signals the relativisation of identity, by which one’s clan and genealogy are the basis of identification. ‘Someone will say, “I know your uncle”, and then he knows you’, Farah, the young engineer, told me in Chapter 4.

The idea that everyone is knowable and connected emerges, I have argued, from the regulatory power of genealogy and the attendant narratives of authenticity and unity. The ability of community scrutiny and triangulation to verify identity is a pervasive myth – a myth not because it is necessarily false but because it has a strongly symbolic narrational power. For instance, reflecting on the 2008 voter registration, Fawzia, a consultant working closely with the government, argued that:

¹⁴ This idea that ‘everyone already knows’ people’s clans is a trope that I discussed in Chapter 3, as part of the dominant image of unity and relationality that enables the practice of triangulation. Resistance to documenting tribal information on the card may also be because the card is supposed to be symbolic of Somaliland’s modernity and statehood, as I explained above.

If the system had been left intact the ID wouldn't be needed. Everyone knows everyone. They will say, this house has seven people and they have all voted. It was the interference from the election committee that meant the system couldn't work and so there were people with two cards, underage kids voting. (Interview, 2013)

Rather than utilising the resources in the 'public' system of knowledge, Fawzia argued, an alien process of identification had been adopted, which had not brought with it the normative censure inherent in the clan system. People had not seen the processes of registration and ID production as authentic or credible – rather, as my research assistant Rooble admitted in Chapter 5, they had deceived the official system, which did not really 'know' them.

In the early days of the 'civil' registration scheme, the impact of the national ID card could not be known. As I explained above, the Somaliland government made it clear via its public information campaign that the card would be required for voter registration, and would be required in a range of transactions in which identity needed to be proved, including registering for school, applying for passports and drivers licenses, getting healthcare, passing checkpoints, staying in hotels, and sending and receiving money. The latter was recognised as necessary because of the shift in recent years in the international regulatory climate, which now demanded that ID was included in all transactions.

However, in many identification encounters, the card did not seem to offer a benefit over the practices of vouching, triangulation and acquaintance, upon which people have relied for so long. 'Already we know each other', said Qays – an acknowledgement of the sophisticated way in which identity is situated and understood without formal documentation. 'Silaanyo doesn't need ID to know Xirsi to make him the minister. He knows him!' (Interview, 2014)

The 'we' in Qays' words is instructive, referring to a particular 'we': the 'we' that can be known. In other words, people who fall within and can therefore exploit the networks of genealogical verification and vouching. These are not boundless, however: at some point the chain of identification stretches and links become tenuous. For instance, Asli, the young woman who had worked as a voter registration team leader, and was now raising her family, told me that she thought the national identity card would be good for travelling within Somaliland, but during our discussion she conceded that she would still need intermediary contacts. 'If I go out of Hargeysa of course I have to show my ID, if I go to Berbera or Carabsiyo or Borama. [So do you take your passport?] No, I don't take my passport. [So what do you take?] Somebody...' (Interview, 2014). Asli explained that she felt that outside of Hargeysa, her passport would not carry value – she still needed the intervention of an identity broker: 'someone from that region or somebody [from] that place, a contact, somebody who is known there' who would intercede on her behalf (ibid). However, such a 'passport' works only in places where her name – or rather her family name – has currency.

Asli felt that a national ID card would open up new possibilities, giving her a device with which to access other parts of the country – places she was not ‘known’.

Here again was the idea of being known. Asli is ‘known’ in Hargeysa and in her clan places. She felt that an ID would give her the ability to become ‘known’ in some way – albeit not the same way – in sites where she was ‘not-known’. Similarly, she felt that the same benefit could accrue to people without fungible connections in Hargeysa: ‘Having an ID is important because people who are not known, people who come from small families, people who come from small villages that are not known, or maybe they didn’t go to university, it will help those people be identified if they need anything’ (ibid). In other words, within their own locales and collectivities, these people may indeed be ‘known’, but in the encounter with the urban environment, where there are a number of intersecting identities and different conceptions and configurations of power, they lack convertible currency with which their ‘knowability’ in one context can become such in another. This is an important acknowledgement: not everyone has the advantages of Asli’s positionality that means they can move back and forth across different kinds of identification. The national identity card appeared to offer the promise, at least, of such knowability – a way to simplify identity, to strip it of clan connotations and offer instead a singular identity of ‘citizen’.

‘Your Card is Not Telling Your People’

And yet, the card is also problematic – new and untested in such encounters, and without shared grounds for knowability. The move to standardise, simplify and stabilise identity in administratively legible ways promises to create a token that represents a particular conception of identity, backed by citizenship. This idea of a common national identity is of course not shared in Somaliland, where contestation remains over the shape and extent of the nation. Moreover, the card itself is not seen by some people as being backed up by the trust and security afforded by vouching. Or rather, it might imply a guarantee, but the state was not (yet) a reliable or effective voucher, and hence the authentication of identity as true and trustworthy could not be made.

‘They trust more the personal relationship than the ID because that’s how the system used to work, and it still works like that’, acknowledged Asli (interview, 2014). For her, the two ‘systems’ were compatible, rather than in tension. ‘Both [systems] are working: so if you bring an elder or show your ID, both will work. In certain places, the ID doesn’t work; and in some places the elder doesn’t work.’ Other young Hargeysa people that I met were also nonplussed by the prospect of an additional identity card, and nonchalantly utilised different identification pathways according to the need at hand. They were accustomed to the traditional form of ‘name as passport’ but they were also familiar with, and often furnished with, actual paperwork, such as school or university ID, the 2010 voter ID card (which they had enthusiastically registered for), and even actual passports, for travel to

Ethiopia or Tanzania for education. Rather than being in contradiction, this suppleness across different modes of identification substantiates what Chabal and Daloz term operating in different ‘registers’ (1999:149). Just as one might speak in a different tone according to different circumstances, identity can be similarly modulated, working up and down a scale of possibilities, as the situation requires. This nicely captures the kind of flexibility in identification practices that Asli sees: different kinds of encounters require differences in how identity is pitched, and thus the way in which it is received (and authenticated). This flexibility to use certain aspects of traditional norms and forms in new contexts or by new actors demonstrates the creative accommodation that has characterised much of Somaliland’s post-conflict reconstruction (Walls and Kibble, 2010:53).

However, Asli had a particular positionality that means she can move back and forth across different kinds of identification: a young graduate, from a politically prominent and connected family, fluent and at ease with diaspora and foreigners, she has the full scale of registers at her disposal. For others in Somaliland, vouching and caaqil authentication will remain the most meaningful and useful modes of identification, and it is these people who tend to rebuff narratives of ‘independence’ (qua autonomy) and citizenship. ‘Clan is always going to be there and be the highest priority in society. It is insurance. You need it even if you have hundreds of IDs’, declared Sagal, a woman in her thirties working for an INGO (interview, 2014).

An ID card does not seem to symbolise these shared grounds of knowability and trust. ‘Your card is not telling your people,’ my research assistant Rooble exclaimed one day, as we discussed the forthcoming ID cards (Fieldnotes, Hargeysa, 2014). ‘Who are your people? Tell me someone who knows you who I know.’ A name on a card was insufficient evidence of identity for Rooble: it carried none of the furnishings of relativity or the possibility of triangulation, or indeed, the guarantee of the clan. ‘If someone ran away and I just say his name, nobody will know him’, he argued. ‘If someone comes to marry my daughter and shows me his card, I do not know him. There is a whole process. The ID card is not marrying my daughter!’ (ibid)

Rooble thus echoed what Inshaar shared in Chapter 3 about the importance of the caaqil to a whole set of social interactions, including marriage, in which the caaqil’s endorsement authenticates a person and also acts as a promise on behalf of the clan to support and protect him. In each of these conversations about identification was the implication that official ID does not index the guarantees that are implicit in the clan system, which I profiled in Chapter 3. With both formal *dammiiin* and informal sponsor arrangements, other people, not formal paperwork, backstop complex transactions and relations. These powerful norms are bound up in the institution of caaqil authentication, meaning that even if the card becomes a default means of affirming identity in interactions with state and state-like

institutions, there is another layer of meaning that it cannot replace. Obsiye, who had worked on voter registration as a recent graduate, emphasised this point in our interview:

Those ID cards in Somaliland are not useful to us. The community know each other; [caaqil authentication] is familiar to us. If they [the government] only focus on ID cards, it will not work. For instance if you go to the rural area, those papers are not working; they will say, "who are you? Who are your clan? Who are your caaqil?" (Interview, 2014)

Resisting Situatedness: The Narrative of Independence

Whilst many of my interlocutors therefore emphasised the importance of clan for identifying trustworthy others, verifying their identity and enabling social relations, I also encountered a discourse vocalised particularly by mostly young, professional and diaspora Somalis in Hargeysa, based on the desire to be autonomous from the clan system, both in terms of financial obligation and identification. Whilst some people were happy – indeed proud – to recite their forefathers to me, explicitly locating themselves in genealogical terms (for instance, Bilal, a member of the diaspora now living in Hargeysa as an electoral commissioner, told me: 'I can count to twelve or thirteen fathers. I can recite the chain' [Interview, 2013]), other people demurred. This seemed to come from two reasons: firstly, that people thought it would be meaningless to me – an address without context; and secondly, and importantly, because they did not want to be situated in that way. Farah, for instance, told me that he had never learnt his *abtirsiino*: his sisters had, he said, but for him it was not necessary (Interview, 2013). Farah was indeed unusual: a young engineer and university lecturer in his mid-20s, he wanted to be defined on his own terms.

This narrative of 'independence' arose in discussions with both young and old interlocutors in Hargeysa. Nur, a senior immigration official, told me that 'modern and sophisticated people will not permit someone to use clan identity' (Interview, 2014). He argued that whilst the argument about clan for protection might be something used in Mogadishu, 'here there is stability and security. There is no person who needs his clan for protection' (ibid). Rather, there is a suggestion that citizenship and nationalism, long denigrated as the mask of clannism (from the post-independence years) or a tool of repression (from the Barre years), might again become meaningful frameworks of identity. There is thus the anticipation of a near future in which '[you] no longer say what tribe are you but just [that you] are a Somalilander and a businessman', said Hassan, a university graduate swept into a senior position in the Ministry of Finance with the 2012 election (Interview, 2012).

Some of my interlocutors expressed their resistance to clan identity in terms of meritocratic advancement based on personal achievement, rather than genealogical connections, which was part of a deeper recognition articulated by civil society leaders that 'culture here does not support the merit' (Omar, interview, 2012). Bashiir, the executive director of a leading civil society organisation, argued that enhanced education opportunities could stimulate

civic rather than clan commitments: ‘people can have skills ... the people will be transformed’ (Interview, 2012).

Certainly, this ‘transformation’ seemed to be at work amongst some of my young interlocutors and research assistants who had fluency across different social groups via connections of friendship and collegiality, and bristled when clan was mentioned. Others, however, resisted their emplacement within the context of clan, wanting instead to be ‘individuals’. This is particularly noticeable amongst young diaspora. For instance, at an event for Somaliland youth in London, a young woman Muna, who had visited Hargeysa recently, declared: ‘Back home it’s all about who you know, who you’re connected to, who you’re affiliated with’ (Oxford House, 2014). Amal, another young woman at the London event, echoed Muna’s sentiment: ‘We don’t have a CV in Somaliland. Why do we need to know someone? Why is it all about connections?’ (ibid) They sought to be defined in terms of their own credentials, and, like other young diaspora, struggled to situate themselves in terms of personal identity separated from clan identity. ‘[When you go back] you have to look a certain way, fit a certain box. Different is ok: we’re just different-different. What we lack as *dhaqan* [culture], we make up for in other ways’ (Muna, Oxford House, 2014). Both Muna and Amal seemed to recognise the difficulty of operating in a context in which the dominant frame is one of ‘knowability’ based on clan identity, and for which they may not have the requisite fluency.¹⁵

Diaspora Somalis who are now living permanently in Hargeysa face these dilemmas acutely. Ugbaad, a British Somalilander woman working for one of Somaliland’s political parties, told me that she felt that there is a ‘façade of being empowered’ in Hargeysa (Interview, 2014). She argued that women need men to identify them in order for them to access key services, but she said that ‘if you are married, your father won’t vouch; if you are married, your husband won’t vouch because he doesn’t want her to be independent’ (ibid). Other diaspora Somalis, such as Liibaan, who worked for a local NGO, or Ashkir, an English teacher, talked to me of the difficulties they faced in either learning to work the system or risking problems in navigating the neopatrimonial processes of politics and power. Liibaan, an entrepreneurial man in his late twenties who I interviewed in 2012, complained to me about the difficulties he had experienced trying to claim back a piece of land in Hargeysa that his family owned, but which was now occupied by a number of IDPs and ramshackle businesses (Interview, 2012). He said that for over a year he had written letters, beseeched local government and police officials, and tried to utilise the ‘bureaucratic’ processes of land entitlement and registration. ‘[We] have gone to the government, to the council, to the police, to get these people to move on so we can build our land. Right? And then they write the letters every month, and they will say “oh, give me one month”, and then they’ll give you

¹⁵ Some find that their lack of fluency in Somali and lack of knowledge of their clan lineages leads to charges that they do not know their culture, and are acting or living in an un-Somali way (*dhaqan-xumo*). A recent trend has been to send UK Somali young people back to learn about culture, language and religion (*dhaqan-celin* or ‘culture return’). In some cases, this is motivated by poor or un-Islamic behaviour, notes Ahmed (2012).

one year. “Oh, give me one month”, and they’ll give you another year. And then nothing happens.’ Liibaan said that he felt he had two choices to resolve the land dispute: firstly, to try to take matters into his own hands, for instance by threatening violence, because he felt that ‘in this country, if you don’t act, you look weak. And if you look weak, people will take advantage’ (ibid). Alternatively, he knew he could utilise the patronage and clientelism of his clan networks:

So the ruling party right now is my tribe, but I’m not using that as a weapon to come from the top. Because I can easily do that: my father and the president are good friends. I don’t want to do that. My, you know ... a lot of the people in the government ministries are good friends with me and my father. But I don’t want to use their power just to move – I want the system to work. And the system is: you go to the local government, you do your paperwork. If you found out this is your land, you have the right to this land, and you have the papers, and you pay taxes, and you tick all the boxes, then you have the right to, you know, for all the police and these other guys to do their job. And that’s not happening! (ibid)

Liibaan was frustrated, and in the end admitted that he had all but abandoned the objective of reclaiming the land. Here is therefore another example of how back channels and networks based on clan can be lubricated in order to facilitate politics in Somaliland. Despite the fact that Liibaan said that he had the correct paperwork, ultimately only his connections held the potential to materialise his claim. However, he refused to utilise this as a currency, using the loaded term ‘weapon’ to describe the way that such a move would utilise certain configurations of power. He wanted the bureaucratic ‘system’ to work, but as a citizen he had less hope of getting the situation resolved than as a clan member. His predicament thus shows the power of the ‘clan-citizen’ frame that I discussed in Chapter 4, in which one gains rights and entitlement through one’s clan and not from the state.

Similarly, Askhir, a young man in his twenties who had moved to Hargeysa from the UK, told me that he wanted to be his own man, not beholden to a family who he did not know or who did not know him (Interview, 2014a). Askhir’s concern was that his relatives did not know who *he* really was, that they had not taken the time to find out about his personal life and identity. Mustafa, an American-Somali businessman, expressed a similar discontent about the way information about him was assumed. He was vehement about the imprimatur of clan within one’s names, protesting that when someone asks who you are, they do so to understand your collective not your personal identity:

What is clan? It is my name. What do you want to know? [Do you want to know] who are *you* or where you come from? ... Saying what clan you are does not say who *you* are. (Interview, 2012)

Of course, this is a different conception of ‘knowing’ to the one that operates within notions of genealogical situatedness, implying instead a wrestling of personal identity out of the clan identity that is matched to one’s ‘official’ identity. Mustafa’s predicament brings into relief the complicated way that personal and collective identities intersect in Somaliland society, and expose the tensions between what are crassly labelled ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’

identities. People do not have to make a choice between ‘citizen’ and ‘clan’ (or any other identities), but multiple ‘points of identification’ come into play to permit social interactions. Nonetheless, it is also the case that the *verification* of identity in everyday life draws very particularly on practices of situating and vouching that are enabled by the knowledge and deployment of personal genealogies and clan networks. These practices, and the norms and expectations that accompany them, significantly underlie efforts to create standardised and formalised procedures of identification and verification in Somaliland.

Deferral and Duplication: The Next Stage of Registration

All these questions and debates about the utility of ID cards, the pre-eminence of ‘modern’ or ‘traditional’ identities, and the desirability of hybrid political processes formed the background to ongoing challenges in the development of Somaliland’s ‘Smart National Identity Card’, and the new voter registration, throughout 2014. Concerns mounted that the national ID card would not be issued in time to permit the effective implementation of voter registration for the June 2015 parliamentary and presidential elections. Indeed, as has been the standard pattern in Somaliland, these elections were duly deferred to March 2017. The legality of the deferral was immediately questioned by Somaliland’s civil society (see Ibrahim, 2015) and also the international community: the DSC, for instance, declared in a letter on 15 May 2015 that the extension of the terms of office threatened Somaliland’s democratic process, public image and its partnership with the UK (British Office Hargeisa, 2015). However, the constitutional court sustained the decision (Somaliland Sun, 2015c), and the government was able to controversially secure extensions for the terms of all three bodies of state.¹⁶

The postponement also meant that there would be enough time for both national ID card and voter registration to take place before the election. The dual-track compromise agreed in mid-2014 had planned for two separate systems until their integration at some as-yet unspecified point in the future (see Figure 4), but the realities of their coincidence was confusing. As Cosoble, a Somalilander working for the IOM as a consultant, puzzled: ‘simultaneous [processes] rather than sequenced doesn’t make any sense!’ (Interview, 2014) The concurrence of the ID card schemes means that the NEC and the MoI both have to undertake separate identity verification from scratch. Both schemes are therefore documenting unique identifiers based on biometric data capture, but without data-sharing or interoperability, so that the resulting records may not be able to be shared. At a basic level, the projects’ synchronicity also suggested that although at the time of voting,

¹⁶ At the time of writing, parliamentary and presidential elections were scheduled for March 2017, and Guurti elections for 2018.

Somalilanders' identity might be checked against the voter *and* the national ID cards, there would be no such triangulation at the point of enrolment for most voters.¹⁷

In the end, these issues about verification and checking eligibility were resolved not by harmonisation of the projects, but by the politics of delay in which the time was again 'eaten up'. Deferrals and interruptions over the course of 2011–14 had meant that planning and preparation was also delayed. Even when the election postponement was agreed, the voter registration scheduled to commence in July 2015, was unable to do so.¹⁸ The national ID card registration finally began to great fanfare in autumn 2014. President Silaanyo symbolically received the first card on 25 September, followed by key cabinet members and Hargeysa's mayor, with the scheme rolling out to the public in Gabiley and Hargeysa in October (Hargeisa Press, 2014; Somaliland Informer, 2014). The launch of the 'Kaadhka Aqoonsiga' (literally, ID card) signalled the beginning of a programme of registration in which all citizens above the age of fifteen¹⁹ were to have their details entered into a central database and be issued with a durable 'smart' card based upon biometric data collection. Voter registration, meanwhile, was rescheduled for December 2015. This meant that there would be a slight staggering in sequencing, but effectively that voter and 'civil' registration would happen together, resurrecting the problems of duplication and verification I have discussed above. When voter registration finally began in January 2016,²⁰ the momentum of national ID card registration had slowed, again calling into question the relationship between the two processes, and raising the issue of how Somalilanders' identities were to be verified. The progress of these two projects, and the implications their success or failure has for Somaliland's official identification system, are thus important areas for future study, as I reflect in the concluding chapter.

Conclusion

From the events I have described in this chapter, it is clear that the disjuncture between voter and 'civil' registration in Somaliland's emerging official identification system is the outcome of nationalist politics, institutional hubris, poor planning, and limited resources. As a result, millions of dollars are to be spent on two almost-identical systems rather than the national identification infrastructure that the NEC-MOI MoU identified as a priority in 2011. These do hold the promise of the creation of a viable voter list in time for the elections scheduled for March 2017, although there are concerns about whether these schemes will strengthen political commitment to timely, effective and, importantly, documented

¹⁷ Presumably the plan was for those who received the national ID card in the first stages of registration would be able to use this as proof of identity/eligibility once voter registration began. The delays in initiating voter registration might have addressed this, however, and this is therefore an area for future research.

¹⁸ Political wrangling over sequencing affected this. In March 2015, Interpeace cancelled its contract with Creative Associates over irregularities in the tender process, raising questions about the expertise available to the voter registration process (Somaliland Times, 2015), and this might also have affected the rollout of the project.

¹⁹ The objective was the registration of 1.5 million citizens (Ministry of Interior, 2014) i.e. the population of eligible voters, rather than all citizens, drawn, presumably, from the voter turnout baseline in the 2001 referendum. See Chapter 5, and particularly Table 2.

²⁰ At the time of writing, this appeared to be progressing smoothly (see SONSAF, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

elections, or undermine it. Moreover, despite the years of planning and months of delay, other outstanding election and identity-related issues, such as constituency demarcation and the development of a civil register, have not been addressed, and there are questions about whether the necessary political capital and finance to do so will be available after the extraordinary investment in the national ID project. Crucially, the planning and preparation phases of these landmark registration programmes also do not appear to have had valuable ‘spillover’ effects (Piccolino, 2015a), for instance by strengthening administrative infrastructures, inter-agency relations, civil service capabilities, or state capacity more generally.

As in 2008–10, these projects have shown that registration (and, relatedly, enumeration) is an intensely political – and politicised – area of public policy in Somaliland. Different actors use the issue of registration to win political points – particularly in the form of extended tenures – rather than investing in a process of long-term institution-building. The longevity of these registration schemes, and their place within a networked, searchable and secure identification infrastructure for Somaliland, is therefore not certain, and so it remains to be seen whether these new projects signify the consolidation of Somaliland’s identity-management infrastructure or new white elephants in the making.

In this chapter, I argued that the use of clan identity as a ‘passport’ for the national ID card raises anew the problem of verification faced by the Somaliland state. The interplay between the two cards, and the deeper issue of verification that it indexes, are crucial aspects of the development of Somaliland’s identification infrastructure. In its planning and early implementation, the national ID card scheme appears to have faced the verification problem that it purported to solve for the voter card: the Somaliland state has no independent way of assuring age and citizenship in the absence of a civil register or continuous ID registration. We have thus seen the continued dependence upon vernacular practices of identification, predominantly caaqil authentication and testimony. The ongoing significance of these vernacular practices of identification, and the comparatively unproven nature of the new ID cards, also calls into question the utility of formal identity documentation, as the accounts from my interlocutors in this chapter show. Official ID cards do not seem to be backed by the same assurances as those given by clan relationships, because of the persistent weakness and circumscription of state institutions, and the unreliability of ID cards. For now, it seems that the state is not yet the trustworthy authoriser of identity, but that legibility remains with Somaliland’s guarantors using the ‘map’ of genealogical relationships. In the next and final chapter, I draw my conclusions about these issues of verification and legibility in Somaliland’s identity architecture, and reflect on the outcomes of my investigation as a whole.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

[T]he constant reinforcement of identificatory demands becomes explicable by the extension of the chains of interdependence that link humans together. (Noiriel, 2001:48)

Formal schemes of order are untenable without some elements of the practical knowledge that they tend to dismiss (Scott, 1998:7)

In undertaking this thesis, I explored many lines of inquiry, met a great many people, attended workshops and meetings, and read, reread and read again my journals, interview notes and memos. This iterative process came from my methodological approach based in grounded theory and interpretive methods. By going back and forth to Somaliland, and through repeated coding of the resulting interviews and fieldnotes, I developed a richly layered picture. One observation by a young man called Farah, who I met in the spring of 2013, stood out across all of these experiences, and it is this statement that acts as an epigram to the thesis. Farah said: ‘the genealogy is the real ID. You do not need ID. Someone will say, “I know your uncle”, and then he knows you’ (Interview, 2013). What did Farah mean? Was this the case? What did this mean for Somaliland’s new ID card schemes? From this remark, the contours of my account thus emerged: the use of genealogy as a form of ID, the idea of vouching as a verification mechanism, and the interplay between ‘official’ forms of identification and ‘vernacular’ practices.

Over the course of my research, I went back to some of the most basic questions about identity, recognition, and relationality. How can we be assured that others are who they say they are? How do people that do not know us verify our identity? How do authorities do this, and what is the impact of this verification? These queries prompted reflection on large political issues, not least the forms of knowledge, truth, and power that undergird identification; the role of interpersonal relations in the construction of social identities; and the consequences of the authorisation, classification, and surveillance of identities by state institutions.

In this concluding chapter, I first review my argument and principal findings under the aegis of the two research streams with which I started: the investigation of the political drivers of national identification schemes, and the conceptualisation of vernacular verification and its role in those programmes. I secondly outline the thesis’ three theoretical dividends in the context of the broader thematic scholarship. Finally, I reflect on the study as a whole, offering suggestions for future research both on the Somaliland case and more generally.

Verification: The Official and the Vernacular

Verification has been the key analytical frame of my inquiry. Verification is critical to the ability of state officials to uniquely and unambiguously register and document official identities, and thus the success of a state's ID schemes turn on the credibility and effectiveness of verification processes. Verification therefore needs to be examined deeply and carefully in order to illuminate how states construct grand schemes of official identification. Such a methodological call is important because verification remains surprisingly under-studied as a political process. It appears in technical manuals or as glimpses in academic scholarship, but is not the subject of extensive empirical research. In this thesis, I have shown that not only is it a valuable area of research, but that the study of identity-management infrastructures necessitates attention to how identification in a community of people actually works.

Although hi-tech identification systems using biometric data and electronic IDs are increasingly the norm, I have argued in this thesis that 'vernacular' practices of testimony and guarantee are integral to a state's sight of its citizenry by ameliorating the 'verification problem'. Certainly, biometric technologies can, when properly designed and implemented, enable 1-to-1 and 1-to-many verification, protecting ID systems from fraudulent and repeated registration. However, the effective operation of these systems assumes that there are underlying legal and administrative frameworks that control eligibility and entitlement. Bureaucratic rules about who can cross borders, take up residence, receive welfare, and vote – in short, who is a citizen – underwrite technical registration, but these are more than administrative policies: they are deeply political. How a state derives and enforces these rules come, I have argued, from narratives about belonging and authenticity – in other words, ideas about who *really* belongs and who is an *authentic* national.

The verification of identity is thus not simply a technical procedure of ascertaining likeness, but a political process of authentication, of 1-in-many verification, which produces and reinforces boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. In the case of Somaliland, I have shown how verification implicitly or explicitly draws on interpersonal 'chains of interdependence' (Noiriel, 2001:48) that situate people in social terrains, and which are used by guarantors when they vouch for a person's eligibility or nationality. Unlike the state's ID cards, these forms of situatedness signify relations of reciprocity and trustworthiness, and make identity intelligible through the use of genealogical reckoning and relational triangulation. These social resources of verification are available in quotidian settings and to ordinary people. Such 'practical knowledge' can also be incorporated into 'official legibility'. In Somaliland, these vernacular practices of identification are integrally connected to official modes and structures because verification for official ID makes provision for, and sometimes requires, a person's authentication by their clan elder (caaqil). Even in the new biometric registration programmes, the safeguard of caaqil authentication and genealogical situatedness endures.

The Identity Architecture

In this thesis, I have argued that this is not primarily explained by institutional weakness or a political logic of hybridity, but have made a stronger claim about the ‘identity architecture’ that structures the norms of identity management in a state. This assemblage of identification meanings and practices is composed of both official categories and protocols, and mundane, micro, and lo-tech practices and institutions. The relationship between the ‘official’ and the ‘vernacular’ is not crystallised, but a shifting configuration in which the balance of components changes over time and space. For instance, where schemes of legibility are inadequate or incomplete, guarantors will be critical to official identification. Where such systems are more consolidated, the verification problem might be addressed in more ‘bureaucratic’ ways. My argument – and original theoretical contribution – is that this identity architecture shapes how people understand, valorise, negotiate, and contest practices of verification, which in turn determine ways of addressing the verification problem.

The idea of the identity architecture therefore draws on the notion of hybridity, but adds to the analytical toolbox by making space for the variety of components, levels and actors that are enmeshed in systems of identification and registration. Some accounts of hybridity prefer structural terms such as constellation or configuration, but like Santos’ use of ‘palimpsest’ (2006), I sought to make the agency in these processes clear. As I explained in Chapter 1, the term ‘architecture’ captures the work of design and construction that goes into maintaining, interpreting, negotiating, and recombining the relationship between the official and the vernacular.

As a conceptual framework, the identity architecture has proved as useful to ‘think with’ as it has been to analyse my empirical material. In the thesis, I showed how it can valuably be applied to states that experience an acute ‘verification problem’. Somaliland is a clear case but not the only one: there are many emerging and developing states without effective breeder documentation, which utilise alternative sources of authentication. My argument about the identity architecture does not apply only to states that openly or extensively deploy guarantors in their identification practices, however. Official ID schemes in other states may not explicitly utilise vernacular forms of identification or verification such as testimony or guarantee, but the formal design of such programmes is likely built upon the same assumptions about authenticity and trustworthiness. At the risk of extending the metaphor too far, whilst such practices may be absent from the apparent form and function of the state’s identity infrastructure, they exist in the blueprint.

It would therefore be productive to apply the conceptual framework of the identity architecture beyond states that overtly utilise societal intermediaries such as Somaliland, and to consider how identification in modern states *in general* is constructed from bureaucratic rules, technical processes, and legal considerations, *and* social practices of

naming, recognising, and situating. Examining how these different processes work together can thus reveal the ambiguities, tensions, and collaborations of such a constellation, and the ways in which such ‘architectures’ are constructed and maintained.

In doing so, we open up the state to look at the warp and weft that underlies its ‘routine functioning’ (Blundo and Le Meur, cited in Fourchard, 2015:39), leading to more nuanced analysis of the state as itself a configuration of processes, institutions and actors that is embedded in, and interacts with, the processes, institutions and actors of society. By looking at identification systems, we thus see that institutions – and the processes and norms that they embody and enact – are rich areas of sociological focus. In Somaliland, the intersections between state institutions and the social context in the area of identification and verification evidence the idea that ‘organizational practices and structures are often either reflections of or responses to rules, beliefs, and conventions built into the wider environment’ (Powell, 2007). Certainly the ‘identity architecture’ of Somaliland shows that institutional design must be responsive to the actual norms, practices and beliefs within society, and therefore this research speaks to ideas of ‘new institutionalism’ (ibid), which not only sees institutions as socially embedded, but also seems to be fruitful for thinking about political reform and institutional power more generally (Bates et al, 2012).

New ID Cards and the Biometric Turn

My investigation into national schemes of identification in Somaliland contributes to a set of studies on registration and documentation within the bodies of literature on citizenship, state-building, development, and democratisation. Of these, a small, though important, subset has been written on contemporary identification in sub-Saharan Africa, including Breckenridge on biometrics in South Africa (2005, 2014) and e-commerce in Ghana (2010); Fourchard on certificates of origin in Nigeria (2015); Marko on biometric passports in South Sudan (2015); and Piccolino on biometric voter registration in Benin (2015a). Szreter and Breckenridge (2012:30–31) acknowledge that registration in particular is a relatively novel subject of study, but they argue that it is a critical conceptual tool for illuminating how individuals are recognised as legal persons and represented as members of particular communities. They call for more analytical elucidation of registration as a concept, and for more comparative studies (ibid). By presenting Somaliland’s experiences of conducting registration, this thesis profiles a compelling example of civil and voter registration in Africa that contributes to the growing body of evidence on registration that Szreter and Breckenridge invite.

The studies that I have cited above and in this thesis offer important insights into how African states, in conjunction with donors and vendors, are delivering complex systems of identification in contexts of under-development, weak economies, and high expectations. They raise important points about how these projects are delivered; the ways in which

multinational contractors have won costly tenders and ‘locked-in’ specific technologies upon which national governments are then dependent (Breckenridge, 2010; World Bank, 2014:27); and how the involvement of foreign experts and service providers means that important technical decisions appear to be made inside a ‘black box’ impenetrable to local actors (Jasanoff, 2006; Mathieson and Wager, 2010; Piccolino, 2015a). These issues highlight the difficulties African states face in overcoming historical under-investment in civil registers and national record-keeping procedures, and how political the work to improve such systems can be.

Three Recommendations

My research on the development of Somaliland’s official identification system since 1991 has revealed a number of important points about the construction of new ID systems that are relevant to African states that are also embarking on similar programmes, and to developing states more generally. This thesis has therefore added new empirical material to our understanding of how developing states grow their capacity for official identification. From this research, I recommend three areas of empirical and analytical focus for the study of these ID card systems, in Africa and beyond.

Inside the Black Box

In general, African bureaucracies and their procedures and processes remain within an analytical black box, in particular the production of identity documents in Africa, which Fourchard (2015:39) argues are still poorly researched. Examining identity-management systems means considering a whole tranche of technical, infrastructural, economic, social, and political factors. Importantly, it also requires looking ‘under the hood’ at how the ministries and agencies responsible for official identification function and work together. Research on the day-to-day operation of these bureaucratic institutions is important for revealing how identification systems are managed, where gaps and weaknesses might arise, and the power of relevant actors. It can also tell us more about the way that states undertake the surveillance and documentation of their citizens, and thus explain the resultant or related techniques of control.

Across all of this, it is critical to consider the ways that registration systems actually work within local contexts. As well as problematising the functionalist understanding of the state ‘as a set of institutions that can be delivered like a product’ (Boege et al, 2008:15), we must also resist assuming that registration systems can be set up ‘out of the box’, or that difficulties in implementation reveal deviance rather than bespoke conditions. This is why I have emphasised the importance at looking at the social context as well as the bureaucracy of official identification. Vernacular processes of identification and verification can also be a ‘black box’, and thus also need to be investigated. The concept of the identity architecture

that I have proposed in this thesis can open up these deeper structures of meaning and explore how they shape administrative processes of file-making and legibility.

Politics Matters

Official identification is a technical and political undertaking. Whilst there are a great number of technological and administrative considerations, the failure of which can have a notable impact on registration and documentation activities, it is the political aspect that is more unpredictable, costly and, ultimately, portentous of success or failure. The case study of Somaliland's voter registration in this thesis clearly confirms Putzel and Di John's argument that '[t]he creation of state capacities is deeply influenced by political decisions and is never simply the result of having the technical expertise necessary for a particular activity' (2012:vi). At various times during 2008–10, technology was hailed as either the saviour or slayer of the voter list according to the direction of the political winds. In the development of Somaliland's new voter and national ID cards, we have again seen that political agendas are wrapped up in debates about procedural sequencing, and that technical specifications were developed before the political and legal framework was in place.

The politicisation of these programmes in Somaliland show how identity records can become political objects, with an existence apart from the relations, identities and practices that produce them. It also shows that though voter registers may not be infallible, public expectations that they should be can lead to the withdrawal of support for such projects. Even if identification projects are technologically sustainable, they may not be politically viable, leading – as in Somaliland in 2011 – to their demise. These factors confirm the importance of examining political discourses about the objectives and costs of identity-management programmes, in order to scrutinise underlying motivations, identify vested interests (winners and losers), and map the margins so as to recognise the excluded and voiceless. Quite simply, politics matters, and thus these programmes need to be studied in the broader context of a state's socio-political dynamics.

Biometrics in Perspective

My third recommendation is to fully investigate the realities of biometric and new technologies for identification without being either romanticisers or naysayers. It is important to take seriously the commitment that Somaliland and other African states are making to biometric technologies. These programmes may be challenging, but they are modern and trim interventions: a few hundred laptops and iris-scanners are more manageable than enormous paper archives. Certainly the 'bureaucratic mirror' (Agar, 2001:104) of record-keeping will still be necessary, but it is likely that innovation will help African states meet the World Bank's ambition of universal civil registration and access to legal proof of identity for all individuals by 2030 (World Bank/WHO, 2014).

However, research on new identification systems also means being open to the difficulties of executing these hi-tech solutions in the context of underdevelopment, poor funding, and weak administrative and logistical infrastructures. We have seen how biometrics can be regarded as a silver bullet, holding the promise of ‘leapfrogging’ conventional techniques of identification and documentation by using physical data from the body to ensure accurate and unique registration (Gelb and Clark, 2013; Breckenridge, 2010). However, the case studies I have presented in this thesis suggest that the capacity to properly implement current biometric technologies may not be in place in some African states, impeding their full potential and making the ‘leap’ a stumble. Somaliland’s experiences call into question the notion that biometric technology obviates institutional systems such as the civil register. Experts at the 2015 Hague Colloquium on Legal Identity noted that there is no empirical evidence yet available that suggests that (high-cost) biometrically enabled national ID systems can perform the necessary requirements of civil registration systems (such as permanent legal recording of identities and the generation of vital statistics) or that such programmes are sustainable without functioning civil registration systems (Hague Colloquium, 2015). Indeed, some scholars and policymakers are sceptical that they can emulate these functions at all, particularly in terms of essential vital statistics (for instance, Setel et al, 2007); whilst others question whether biometrics are simply a ‘fad’, distracting from the real democratic and political challenges facing African states (Wrong, 2013).

Somaliland’s national ID cards are obviously only just being developed. It is possible that the promised civil registration component will be delivered in the near future, and that therefore Somaliland will join Nigeria and the handful of other African states that are effectively integrating biometric components into national identity-management infrastructures. However, it is also the case that the energy, resources, and institutional capital that has been invested in biometric ID cards may have been more wisely spent on election management (skills, resources, planning and expertise) and permanent systems of citizen identification, which practitioners and observers agree are more likely to have greater long-term state-building benefits (for instance, Gelb and Clark, 2013; Hague Colloquium, 2014). Moreover, as I have argued above and throughout this thesis, biometric processes of identification need political commitment and public engagement to work, and thus both the technical and political aspects of these new biometric ID programmes need to be considered.

Theoretical Dividends and Broader Themes

At the start of this chapter I reflected that this research has indexed some of the big questions of politics. The work I have presented in this thesis is empirically rich, contributing principally to the literatures on Somaliland, and registration and identification. It speaks also to broader analytical themes and scholarly debates, and my findings on the political drivers of official identification schemes and the identity architecture are relevant

to research projects on state administration, citizenship, electoral management and democratisation, neopatrimonial politics, and state-building and consolidation. In particular, I see my research as having three main theoretical ‘dividends’, which I elucidate in this section.

The Usefulness of Legibility

Scott’s idea of ‘legibility’ has been the leitmotif of this thesis. Empirically, of course, my fieldwork sought to ‘read’ and understand the materials, texts, and interpretations I encountered in Hargeysa. Analytically, it has been an important optic with which to interpret the ways that authorities in Somaliland try to ‘see’ the population in order to make manifold identities intelligible and regulate variety and difference. Scott’s 1998 work is of course a critique of the standardising vision of high-modernism, and I have concurred, arguing that, though Somaliland governments have sought to fabricate the administrative fiction of unique official identities, such panoptic programmes are out of reach. Nonetheless, I have found that legibility has been productive heuristic in my research, leading to new analytical applications. I have therefore used it to explain the ways that guarantors and vouchsafers read and situate people in social networks and structures of meaning (‘metic’ legibility); and how political actors are trying to make Somaliland recognisable as a *de jure* state through the production of ‘stately’ artefacts like national ID cards.

I am certainly not the first to see the possibilities in the concept of legibility. We find traces and echoes of the underlying ideas about ‘ways of seeing’ in the influential political writings of Weber, Foucault, and Anderson, to name a few. More contemporaneously, Piccolino (2015a) has described Benin’s voter registration project as an attempt to ‘make democracy legible’; and, although he did not use the term, Balthasar’s 2012 PhD thesis about institutional and socio-cognitive standardisation in Somaliland indexes the key themes of simplification and intelligibility. More generally, Geschiere (2007:129) has noted that applying Scott’s central ideas to the analysis of African states produces ‘valuable insights’. Of course, this does not mean it is without critique. Whilst acknowledging the ‘clarity and power of Scott’s analytic vision’, which makes it seem as though state simplifications are ‘everywhere we look’, Ferguson (2005:377) has notably called into question the generalisability of Scott’s theoretical schemes in the present world. Obviously Somaliland is not one of Scott’s classic high-modernist states, but neither is it an organisation like Ferguson’s global oil company. In fact, as with other states in sub-Saharan Africa, it is doggedly pursuing an agenda of development, state-making and ‘modernity’, as evident in its emulative biometric registration schemes. In such cases, legibility is a rich and generative concept that offers considerable analytical mileage for the study of identification and registration.

Nuances of Hybridity

The second theoretical dividend of this thesis has been the contribution to the emerging scholarship on hybridity, thus meeting the call by Meagher (2012:1073) for more empirically informed analysis of hybrid governance contexts. In this thesis, I have explored the ways in which hybridity is manifested in particular processes and sites, rather than being a systemic designation such as the concept of ‘hybrid political orders’ (Boege et al, 2008). Rather than making claims across the whole system of governance, I have examined the interlocking of specific practices and actors in a particular area of state functionality – the system of official identification – and sought to portray the heterogeneous landscape of power and authority. In making this argument, I have necessarily juxtaposed the different forms of identification and contextualisation undertaken by, crudely, ‘the state’, which seeks individualisation, and ‘the clan’, in which relationality matters. However, as I emphasised in the thesis, in reality there are critical interplays and overlaps between the ways that socially embedded actors and state officials ‘read’ applicants. Indeed, I have argued that the incorporation of caaqil verification into state procedures of identification is more than coexistence, positing that verification is a key site of normative and institutional synthesis, in which metic and official legibility are conjoined. I explained the emergence of this synthetic practice in terms of pragmatism and symbolism: it has been an essential response to the actualities of the state’s nascent (and thus incomplete) identity-management infrastructure; and part of a deeper commitment to blending clan and state institutions, and replicating narratives of authentic belonging that provide coherence and meaning in the unrecognised state.

I have argued that this vernacular-official hybridisation is not a one-off adaptation, but a process that exhibits flexibility and flux. As Galvan has noted about rural councils in Senegal, ‘syncretic adaptation does not entail a singular, uniform reinterpretation of new institutions in terms of a timeless or homogenous tradition’ but iterated acts of invention and definition (in Galvan and Sil, 2007:19). The ways in which the Somaliland state is undertaking identification is evolving, as officials acquire institutional memory and experience, and the emerging documentary ecosystem becomes more interconnected. Moreover, even though the role of elders and other witnesses is codified in law and regulations, the actual practice of these responsibilities is changing over time. These are not essentialised ‘traditional’ actors, and they do not ‘mechanically stick to some institutionally prescribed roles, discourses or modes of action’ (Renders, 2010:26), but exercise discretion, manipulation, and influence, as we saw during the 2008 voter registration. In Somaliland, official procedures are inflected with ‘social’ logics, just as caaqils’ roles are shaped by their incorporation in state institutions. This therefore supports Galvan and Sil’s proposition that actors’ encounters with institutional settings not only shape and change those institutions and their formal rules and routines, but also affect the understandings and practices of the actors’ sociocultural resources in a dialectical or creative process (2007:8). Moreover, it also shows the value of resisting tradition-modernity dichotomies, and examining instead the contemporaneous ways that actors and practices intersect and are understood. Through this

thesis, I therefore show that more attention should be paid to the complex configurations of hybrid politics, and the ways in which such systems adapt over time and space. There is not as single moment of hybridisation, but rather repeated, dynamic engagements between multiply situated actors and the practices they deploy.

Adopting these conceptual nuances will serve to enrich accounts of hybridity, in Somaliland and elsewhere. The conceptual framework of the identity architecture also demonstrates the utility of hybridity to our understandings of identification processes, and thus key areas of statecraft, more generally. In being open to the different ways that social, political, economic and bureaucratic logics and practices mesh together, we can learn more about the ways that states and citizens interact, and thus gain more insight into the quotidian realities of contemporary socio-political life.

Identity and the State

As I made clear above, Scott's idea of legibility has been integral to my argument that successive Somaliland governments have tried to use ever-more complex national identification schemes as ways of instantiating Somaliland's claim to statehood – of making it 'legible' as a state within the global system of states. Certainly the idea that ID cards can help make states is not a new one (Caplan and Torpey, 2001; Szreter and Breckenridge, 2012). As with tax collection, the provision of law and order, and the maintenance of public goods, the registration and identification of citizens is a principal aspect of the state's standardising and infrastructural power. In Somaliland, however, ID card and registration systems are more than the accoutrements of a functional, modern state, important for good planning and policy-making. The issue of who counts as a Somalilander is critical to Somaliland's claims to statehood: in naming, identifying and thus recognising citizens, Somaliland's state-makers make a statement about Somaliland's own recognisability. The ID card programmes I have described in this thesis can thus be seen as projecting 'lines of sight' (Amoore, 2009) into the unknown in an attempt to bring into focus a recognised state in which the name imprinted onto ID cards and passports – the Republic of Somaliland – has meaning and credibility. Of course, recognition needs more than claims inscribed on paper artefacts, requiring change in the norms of legality, sovereignty and stability that form the nucleus of the current international system. However, just as the documentation of a person's status can be subject-making – they *become* a citizen – so it is possible that the Somaliland state's repeated efforts to materialise its claim may lead to, if not external validation, then perhaps more consolidated endorsement from its internal constituencies. The study of official identification schemes therefore reveals critical insights about nation-making. Just as the Somaliland state seeks to be seen by the international community, it also seeks to be recognisable to its citizens *as a state*. Although we cannot predict the trajectory of Somaliland's quest for recognition, following the trail of its ID-card programmes may light the way, and in the process, tell us more about how states gain facticity and meaning.

My study also emphasises the importance of examining the techniques of power and inclusion that are often captured under the more general category of ‘state-building’. Typically, studies on state-building are concerned with the macro level of economics and politics, but I have focused in this thesis on specific procedures of administration in order to offer a more fine-grained analysis of state-building processes in Somaliland. Doing so opens up the ‘humble modalities of power’ that help us to understand how states ‘actually constitute and maintain themselves as going concerns’ (Torpey, 2000:3). This shows, therefore, how important it is to look at the different components of the state, dereifying it as far as possible to get into the ways that different ministries, agencies, and institutions operate, and the constellation of norms, practices and actors that make up state authority at all levels of governance. The success of schemes of registration and identification can also demonstrate the degree to which a state is able to reach into and across society. As policymakers and scholars continue to see such penetrative power as an indicator of state resilience and fragility (for instance, Putzel and Di John, 2012), understanding projects of identity management can only enhance such evaluations for the better by offering new lines of inquiry and more detailed empirical assessments.

Research Reflections

Having reviewed my findings and their theoretical implications, I turn now to considering the research project as a whole. As I explained in Chapter 1, my methodological approach was inspired by the principles of grounded theory. This meant that, although I began this study with a number of lines of inquiry, I was open to the actual stories (and silences) of my interlocutors in Hargeysa. I began with an interest in the ways that Somalilanders conceptualise and negotiate their citizenship; once in the field, I shifted track to attend closely to the ways in which such identities and statuses are publicly articulated. This led me to the projects of official identification that I have explored in this thesis. Through this iterative and attentive approach, I have opened up a field of research that is new to the academic scholarship on Somaliland politics. Overall, the triad of methods that I adopted – interviews, participant observation, and archival research – proved to be appropriate and generative, and therefore can be recommended for further empirical study of this type. Nonetheless, this study has been subject to certain constraints, not least the challenges of solitary fieldwork, such as scalability, mobility, and funding, and thus my analytical and empirical findings have understandable limitations. I outline three significant areas below, reflecting on how these shaped my research project, and the opportunities for further research that they signal.

On the Threshold: Somaliland's ID Ecosystem

My fieldwork spanned the period 2012 to 2014, enabling me to observe and participate in a number of different events and activities, and also to witness the unfolding of the political debates around the voter register and national ID card. Indeed, it was this flexibility that enabled me to grow and adapt my research over time in response to developments in Somaliland. This was particularly important since I had intended to cover the launch and implementation of the new voter registration scheme in 2013/14 and then also the national ID card scheme in the summer of 2014. Unfortunately, the political debates that I described in Chapter 6 impeded the scheduled rollout of these projects. This meant that, although I made a fourth trip to Somaliland in August 2014, the final thesis does not include material about these projects. Nonetheless, the transitional phase between the suspension of the 2010 voter register and the development of a new one actually proved extremely productive to study since it brought to the fore debates about the desirability and functionality of biometric technology in Somaliland, the importance of vernacular verification, and the political tensions and trade-offs between the Ministry of Interior, NEC, Presidency and international donors.

This is a time of transition for Somaliland's official identification infrastructure. As I described in Chapter 4, new e-passports and smart driver's licenses are also being rolled out, and the voter and 'civil' registrations of 2015/16 are underway. Further research can therefore usefully explore the modalities of these different forms of ID. For instance, if the national ID cards are to be required at checkpoints, as the Ministry of Interior has declared, observation and interviews of these new practices will shed light on the power relations produced at these sites of control. In many countries, the introduction of biometric national IDs is related to anti-terrorism and migration control (see Amoore, 2006; Lyon, 2007), as well as commercial concerns such as identity security and the management of welfare payments, such as in South Africa (see Breckenridge, 2005; 2014). Though unrecognised, Somaliland is not immune to such influences, and therefore future work may fruitfully consider also the broader implications of Somaliland's 'biometric turn', in particular the aspects of surveillance and control (Agamben, 2008; Zureik with Hindle, 2004).

As Somaliland tries to construct an 'ecosystem' of ID cards, important tests are on the horizon, not least in terms of the maintenance of the resulting databases, the utility of the cards, questions of compliance, and data-sharing and privacy issues. Further research on the development of these ID projects individually and as a system, as well as longitudinal research, can therefore address questions about the sustainability of this growing ID system, record changes in people's perceptions of the utility and symbolism of ID cards, and consider the broader context of political reform and state-building in Somaliland.

Of the Emic and the Banal: Researching Everyday Practices of Identity

The explication of vouching represents a key contribution of this research to work on identification systems, particularly in emerging and developing states where verification does not draw on a comprehensive, precise or impartial system of breeder documentation. In the thesis, I described how naming and recognition work within scripts of trustworthiness, reciprocity and authenticity, and focused on the particular ways that these work to identify and verify Somalilanders in quotidian social contexts. I used a mixture of interviews, ethnography and secondary literature to draw out my interpretation of these practices. Of course, observing, describing and interpreting these practices posed a considerable ‘outsider’ challenge. On the one hand, ‘being an outsider gave me the freedom to ask seemingly banal questions about what it “feels like”’ (Miller-Idriss, 2009:197), and therefore to ‘draw into analysis [...] the very things that insiders take for granted’ (Soss, 2006:137). On the other hand, as I reflected in Chapter 1, it is exactly the ‘taken-for-grantedness’ of these practices that makes them difficult to view, for ‘insiders’ as well as ‘outsiders’.

It would therefore be interesting and rewarding to extend the qualitative findings of Chapters 3 and 6 through more intensive periods of participant observation and political ethnography, in order to dig deeper into the times, spaces, and relations of vouching and vernacular verification. Taking an immersive, fine-grained view will not only be revealing of the variety and complexity of these practices – for instance, through looking at the ways in which they function in different social segments or geographic regions – but it will also help to problematise the often-reified and over-simplified ways in which people talk about clan identity, lineage and genealogy. In addition, ethnographic research into the ways in which vouching works in ‘public’ spaces and encounters, such as the ‘homework’ for meetings in ministerial offices as described by the civil servant Sharif (Chapter 3), will not only supplement the work in this thesis, but also bring it into closer conversation with the literatures on neopatrimonialism, clientelism and patronage that comprises an influential theme in African political studies; and open up opportunities for rewarding comparative work on the ‘economy of connections’ (Simons, 1995) in other African countries.

Beyond Hargeysa: Extending the Case

The research presented in this thesis is drawn from fieldwork in Hargeysa, the seat of decision-making about the design and implementation of Somaliland’s national identification and registration programmes. Over the course of my repeated visits, I undertook a variety of interviews with key officials and stakeholders, as well as Somalilanders from different backgrounds. Of course, as I reflected in Chapter 1, research beyond the capital was impeded by complicated logistics and high costs. This therefore presents an opportunity to undertake research amongst different urban and rural communities in order to augment the picture presented here of Somaliland’s identity

architecture. Work in the west and east of the country will be particularly productive for understanding regional and clan variation in authentication practices and assessing national support for the government's schemes of legibility.

As I explained in Chapter 1, the single case-study approach I pursued here fitted with my epistemological and methodological principles. Certainly, my findings might usefully form the basis for research into other single-cases (such as an examination of the ways in which the new state of South Sudan has used identity documentation to project its stateness); or as the basis for comparative study (for instance by applying my research approach to the ID card programme in Mogadishu, Somalia to see whether similar genealogical frames are at work). In light of how many African states are rolling out new systems of registration, research into how these schemes are built, and how they work with local notions of authentication, will be timely and worthwhile.

In addition, further research could open up other ways of addressing the verification problem. Although national ID cards appear to be a priority for African governments, there are innovative means of identifying people without traditional paper-based approaches that constitute interesting research avenues. Mobile phones are increasingly being recognised for their potential as identity-authentication devices (Smart Card Alliance, 2012); and, in light of the 'mobile first' development trajectory of many countries of the Global South, mobile applications are being seen as opportunities for better service delivery and communication (World Bank, 2012; Plan International, 2015; Donovan and Martin, 2012; Iazzolino, 2015). Similarly, the impact of 'big data' on transforming conventional databases and information sharing will lead to new innovations in identity management (Jacobs, 2014; Mann; World Bank/WHO, 2014). The ways in which new technologies can be used to authenticate identity is thus a fertile area of research that could complement and extend this thesis' contribution to the study of identity verification.

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Interviews, 2012–14

¹ All interviewees have been given a pseudonym; however, some biographical information is included in terms of their occupation for the purposes of differentiation.

² Unless indicated, all interviews took place in Hargeisa, Somaliland.

³ Repeat or follow-up interviews are listed as separate entries, and are indicated by (*), although note that not all meetings and conversations are recorded here (see Chapter 1).

⁴ The main language of the interview is noted. Where the language was undertaken in Somali, the name of the translator is given in brackets.

No.	Pseudonym ¹	Description ²	Date ³	Language ⁴	In-text Citation
1	Abdinuur	Sultaan	5 December 2012	English	Abdinuur, interview, 2012
2	Abdirahman	Manager, Telesom	9 August 2014	English	Abdirahman, interview, 2014
3	Abdirashiid	Former electoral commissioner	27 May 2013	English	Abdirashiid, interview, 2013a
4	"	"	1 June 2013	English	Abdirashiid, interview, 2013b
5	Abdisamad	NGO officer	25 November 2012	English	Abdisamad, interview, 2012
6	Abdishakur	Student (interview in London)	12 October 2011	English	Abdishakur, interview, 2011
7	Abdiweli	Media manager and research assistant	30 August 2014	English	Abdiweli, interview, 2014
8	Abdullahi	Senior civil servant, Ministry of Interior	5 May 2013	English	Abdullahi, interview, 2013
9	"	"	30 August 2014	English	Abdullahi, interview, 2014
10	Abshir	Businessman	5 December 2012	English	Abshir, interview, 2012
11	Ali	Youth activist	21 October 2012	English	Ali, interview, 2012
12	Asli	2008 voter registration officer	6 August 2014	English	Asli, interview, 2014
13	Amina	Civil society leader	21 November 2012	English	Amina, interview, 2012
14	Anis	Civil servant, Hargeisa municipality	18 August 2014	English	Anis, interview, 2014
15	Aniso	Lawyer	17 November 2012	English	Aniso, interview, 2012
16	Asad	Former minister and SNM member	8 November 2012	English	Asad, interview, 2012
17	"	"	11 May 2013	English	Asad, interview, 2013a
18	"	"	31 May 2013	English	Asad, interview, 2013b
19	Ashkir	Teacher and research assistant	26 August 2014	English	Ashkir, interview, 2014a
20	"	"	1 September 2014	English	Ashkir, interview, 2014b
21	"	"	2 September 2014	English	Ashkir, interview, 2014c
22	Awil	INGO officer	13 May 2013	English	Awil, interview, 2013
23	Axmed	Researcher	22 October 2012	English	Axmed, interview, 2012a
24	"	"	24 October 2012	English	Axmed, interview, 2012b
25	Bashir	Civil society leader	18 April 2012	English	Bashir, interview, 2012
26	Baxsan	Accounting graduate	3 September 2014	Somali (Inshaar)	Baxsan, interview, 2014
27	Bedri	Senior Guurti member	30 October 2012	Somali (Bedri's assistant)	Bedri, interview, 2012
28	Bilal	Electoral commissioner	7 May 2013	English	Bilal, interview, 2013

29	Calas	Senior civil servant, Ministry of Public Works	19 August 2014	Somali (Abdiweli)	Calas, interview, 2014
30	Gilmi	Lawyer	13 November 2012	English	Gilmi, interview, 2012
31	Cosoble	Consultant, IOM	18 August 2014	English	Cosoble, interview, 2014
32	Daacad	Civil society leader	19 April 2012	English	Daacad, interview, 2012
33	"	"	13 August 2014	English	Daacad, interview, 2014
34	Dacar	Senior Guurti member	31 October 2012	English	Dacar, interview, 2012
35	Dagal	Civil servant, Hargeisa municipality	18 August 2014	English	Dagal, interview, 2014a
36	"	"	30 August 2014	Somali (Abdiweli)	Dagal, interview, 2014b
37	Dahaabo	Poet	2 June 2013	Somali (Ubax)	Dahaabo, interview, 2013
38	Dahir	Senior civil servant, ICT commission	9 August 2014	English	Dahir, interview, 2014
39	Daleel	Senior civil servant, civil registration, Ministry of Interior	14 August 2014	Somali (Rooble)	Daleel, interview, 2014
40	Dalmar	NGO officer	15 October 2012	English	Dalmar, interview, 2012
41	David	Election specialist and NEC consultant	24 October 2013 (London)	English	David, interview, 2013
42	Dayib	Senior civil servant, Department of Immigration	30 August 2014	Somali (Abdiweli)	Dayib, interview, 2014
43	Deqa	Researcher	9 October 2012	English	Deqa, interview, 2012
44	Dirie	Journalist	29 October 2012	English	Dirie, interview, 2012
45	Fahmi	Civil society leader	30 May 2013	English	Fahmi, interview, 2013a
46	"	"	8 June 2013	English	Fahmi, interview, 2013b
47	Farah	Engineer	27 April 2013	English	Farah, interview, 2013
48	Farhan	Civil servant, National Electoral Commission	31 August 2014	English	Farhan, interview, 2014
49	Fawzia	Civil servant	26 March 2013	English	Fawzia, interview, 2013
50	Filsan	Youth activist	24 October 2012	English	Filsan, interview, 2012
51	Fowski	MP	27 August 2014	English	Fowski, interview, 2014
52	Fuaad	Human rights activist	22 November 2012	English	Fuaad, interview, 2012
53	Gaani	Senior civil servant, National Electoral Commission	31 August 2014	English	Gaani, interview, 2014
54	Geedi	Officer, Department of Immigration	6 May 2013	Somali (Tawfiq)	Geedi, interview, 2013
55	Gulaid	Senior member of Waddani	18 August 2014	English	Gulaid, interview, 2014a
56	"	"	19 August 2014	English	Gulaid, interview, 2014b
57	Halgan	Manager, Hargeisa Orphanage	3 September 2014	English and Somali (Idil)	Halgan, interview, 2014
58	Halwo	NGO director	14 November 2012	English and Somali	Halwo, interview, 2012
59	Hassan	Civil servant, Ministry of Finance	12 November 2012	English	Hassan, interview, 2012
60	Haweeyo	Civil society leader	7 November 2012	English	Haweeyo, interview, 2012
61	Haybe	Senior civil servant, National Electoral Commission	27 August 2014	English	Haybe, interview, 2014
62	Hibo	Civil society leader	25 October 2012	English	Hibo, interview, 2012
63	Hussein	Researcher	6 December 2012	English	Hussein, interview, 2012
64	"	"	9 August 2014	English	Hussein, interview, 2014
65	Ibrahim	Minister	13 May 2013	English and Somali (Tawfiq)	Ibrahim, interview, 2013
66	Idil	Businesswoman	15 April 2013	English	Idil, interview, 2013
67	Ifrax	Civil society leader	1 September 2014	English	Ifrax, interview, 2014
68	Ilyaa	2008 voter registration officer	6 August 2014	English	Ilyaa, interview, 2014

69	Inshaar	IT manager and research assistant	26 August 2014	English	Inshaar, interview, 2014a
70	"	"	30 August 2014	English	Inshaar, interview, 2014b
71	Ismaacil	Consultant, National Electoral Commissioner	8 May 2013	English	Ismaacil, interview, 2013
72	Jamaac	INGO officer	23 March 2013	English	Jamaac, interview, 2013
73	Jamaal	Minister, Ministry of Interior	4 December 2012	English	Jamaal, interview, 2012
74	Jimcaale	Electoral commissioner	27 August 2014	English	Jimcaale, interview, 2014
75	John	INGO consultant	8 August 2014	English	John, interview 2014
76	Kayse	2008 voter registration officer	6 August 2014	English	Kayse, interview, 2014
77	Khadar	Sultaan	9 May 2013	Somali (Tawfiq)	Khadar, interview, 2013
78	Khadija	NGO officer	22 October 2012	English	Khadija, interview, 2012
79	Khalid	Civil servant, civil registration, Ministry of Interior	15 May 2013	Somali (Tawfiq)	Khalid, interview, 2013
80	"	"	14 August 2014	Somali (Rooble)	Khalid, interview, 2014
81	Kinsi	Development graduate	2 September 2014	English	Kinsi, interview, 2014
82	Kulane	Construction worker	1 September 2014	Somali (Ashkir)	Kulane, interview, 2014
83	Libaan	NGO officer	6 November 2012	English	Libaan, interview, 2012
84	Maxamed	Chief caaqil	18 August 2014	English	Maxamed, interview, 2014
85	Mowliid	Civil society leader	14 November 2012	English	Mowliid, interview, 2012
86	Mukhtaar	Electoral commissioner	18 March 2013	English	Mukhtaar, interview, 2013
87	Muse	Senior civil servant, Ministry of Public Works	19 August 2014	English	Muse, interview, 2014
88	Mustafa	Businessman	31 October 2012	English	Mustafa, interview, 2012
89	Muxudin	Journalist	1 September 2014	English	Muxudin, interview, 2014
90	Nabil	MP	19 November 2012	English	Nabil, interview, 2012
91	Nasteho,	Civil society leader	10 October 2012	English	Nasteho, interview, 2012
92	Nelson	INGO officer	12 November 2012	English	Nelson, interview, 2012
93	Nur	Senior officer, Department of Immigration	16 August 2014	English	Nur, interview, 2014
94	Obsiye	2008 voter registration officer	6 August 2014	English	Obsiye, interview, 2014
95	Omar	NGO director	21 October 2012	English	Omar, interview, 2012
96	Qasim	Civil servant, Ministry of Interior	27 May 2013	English	Qasim, interview, 2013
97	Qays	Civil registration taskforce member	10 August 2014	English	Qays, interview, 2014
98	Quulle	Civil society leader	17 April 2012	English	Quulle, interview, 2012
99	Raqiya	Human rights commissioner	2 December 2012	English	Raqiya, interview, 2012
100	Roda	Administrator and research assistant	18 November 2012	English	Roda, interview, 2012
101	Rooble	NGO officer and research assistant	6 August 2014	English	Rooble, interview, 2014a
102	"	"	9 August 2014	English	Rooble, interview, 2014b
103	"	"	10 August 2014	English	Rooble, interview, 2014c
104	Saadaq	Taxi driver	18 August 2014	English	Saadaq, interview, 2014
105	Saahid	Journalist	1 September 2014	English	Saahid, interview, 2014
106	Saalim	NGO director	25 March 2013	English	Saalim, interview, 2013
107	Sagal	INGO officer	2 September 2014	English	Sagal, interview, 2014
108	Salow	Technical manager, Sahal	7 August 2014	English	Salow, interview, 2014
109	Samatar	2008 voter registration officer	12 August 2014	English	Samatar, interview, 2014

110	Samiira	NGO officer	6 December 2012	English	Samiira, interview, 2012
111	Sharif	Senior civil servant, Ministry of Education	3 November 2012	English	Sharif, interview, 2012
112	"	"	24 August 2014	English	Sharif, interview, 2014
113	Shermarke	MP	22 May 2013	English	Shermarke, interview, 2013
114	Shire	Lawyer	18 November 2012	Somali (Roda)	Shire, interview, 2012
115	Shirwac	Civil society leader	5 November 2012	Somali (Shirwac's colleague)	Shirwac, interview, 2012
116	Shuuriye	Statistician, Ministry of Planning	2 September 2014	English	Shuuriye, interview, 2014
117	Tamsin	International democratisation consultant	9 December 2014 (London)	English	Tamsin, interview, 2014
118	Tarabi	Senior member of Waddani	18 August 2014	English	Tarabi, interview, 2014
119	Tawfiq	Student and research assistant	15 November 2012	English	Tawfiq, interview, 2012
120	Ubax	INGO officer	11 November 2012	English	Ubax, interview, 2012
121	Ugbaad	Senior member of UCID	16 August 2014	English	Ugbaad, interview, 2014
122	Warfa	Livestock trader	1 September 2014	Somali (Ashkir)	Warfa, interview, 2014
123	Warsame	Journalist	13 November 2012	English and Somali	Warsame, interview, 2012
124	Xaashi	Activist	7 June 2013	English	Xaashi, interview, 2013
125	Yaasmin	Businesswoman	2 September 2014	Somali (Ashkir)	Yaasmin, interview, 2014
126	Yasin	Member of Waddani	6 August 2014	English	Yasin, interview, 2014a
127	"	"	10 August 2014	English and Somali (Rooble)	Yasin, interview, 2014b
128	Yoonis	IT manager, Sahal	7 August 2014	English	Yoonis, interview, 2014

Personal Correspondence

In-text Citation	Full Reference
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